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Παλαίφατος δ' ἐν βροτῶις γέρων λόγος
τέτυκται, μέγαν τελεσθέντα φωτὸς ὄλβον
τεκνοῦσθαι, μη δ' ἄπαιδα θνήσκειν,
ἐκ δ' ἀγαθᾶς τύχας γένει
βλαστάνειν ἀκόρεστον ζιζύν.

These are the words of an ancient Tragedian,
Æschylus hight, not a trifling nor "reedy" one,
Meaning, "Prosperity often gives birth
To a dread brood of Evil, nor dies upon earth
Childless; but leaves an insatiate pack
Of calamities, howling like wolves on the track
Of mortals o'er pampered.—A white-bearded Sage
Among sayings," he tells us, e'en then, in that age.

SO VERY HUMAN

A Tale of the Present Day.

BY

ALFRED BATE RICHARDS.

Ἀμφὶ δὲ φθάλμους φόβος.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS book is founded upon an original drama, written and printed for private circulation by the author in 1863. The novel itself has been written some five years. The title only is of more recent date. On the occasion of the Farewell Dinner given to the late CHARLES DICKENS, of whom all eulogy in these pages is felt to be superfluous, he used these words: "I am so VERY HUMAN!" The author trusts that in adopting this expression as the title of his work, he has done no wrong to the memory of that great artist and genial man. He is conscious of having attempted to deal with a difficult and delicate subject; but he also trusts that the spirit in which it is treated will be considered an ample justification.

One word with regard to the Lawyers. As the author has said, there is nothing personal, nothing pointed at individuals, in this book. If he could, without offence, name some, who are exempt from the sweeping charges he has directed against a system, he would do so. There are solicitors whom he regards with feelings of friendship, gratitude, and

esteem. Next to these he has been most condemnatory of the Police. There are many admirable men in that Force, whose merits shine the brighter for the difficulties and temptations surrounding them. Some of the superintendents and inspectors are worthy of the highest praise. Some of the ordinary constables display great forbearance and kindness, and are not less efficient on that account. The writer wishes to see the Police better paid, and chosen invariably from a better class of men. Moreover, he has reason to believe that many of the duties imposed upon the Police are most repugnant to them, as for instance the hoop crusade, and the late illegal attack upon the match-makers' procession. The Police should not be centralised, nor organised as an army in our midst. They should be under local supervision and restraint. And above all, those who take the night charges should, he ventures to suggest, not belong to the Force, but be appointed by the rate-payers. The author merely mentions these things to show that he is not animated by a mere blind fury against the guardians of order, but would ameliorate their condition as the first step towards the social improvement he is desirous should take place. As it is, the seeds of revenge and hatred are widely sown by the tyrannical interference with the small traffic of the poor, and the constant refrain of the pitiless "Move on." Since these pages were written, how many illustrations of the evils, which he has reprehended and pictured, have forced themselves upon the unwilling attention of the public.

There is one thing which may possibly be deemed

a mere author's invention, namely, the sudden blindness of Blanche Aubrey, and her as sudden recovery of sight. This is not the case: similar examples might easily be quoted. A friend writing to the author from Pesth, some time after the play was printed, mentioned as an incident which had excited singular interest in that city, the case of a young and beautiful married lady, possessed of rare accomplishments and well-known in Society, who suddenly lost her sight without any apparent reason, and as suddenly, after several months, recovered it. A late suicide of a married lady of wealth and position in New York, bears a striking resemblance to the attempted act of Blanche, both in its causes and the actual features of the act. Lastly, if it is considered that there is a tinge of superstition, *infra gli altri difetti del libretto*, especially with regard to dreams, presentiments, coincidences, and the like, the author pleads the example of the greatest men who have not been able to refuse their credence to that which philosophy cannot fathom. Who is able even to define dreams? Ὀνείρατα τὰ σκοτίας τέκνα, θάνυμασ τε νεφέλαι, φρενός μὲν σκιάι, του φόβου μελαγχιτώνες ἄγγελοι, φωτὸς δὲ οὐ πολλάκις ἐν ἄγγελοι πάρεισι φίλοι.

London, June 10th, 1871.

THE DENIZENS OF THE WELL.

Prologue—Apologue.

“EFTSOONS,” quoth the Newt, “we shall be thrown upon the bounty of an unfeeling world; for the well is certainly getting dry. I shall look out for a situation in an aquarium, which I am told is the best thing going for a person of my brilliant colour, elegant form, and engaging manners.”

The Frog said, “I shall give an operatic entertainment, with the assistance of the numerous and talented Tadpole family. I shall engage Mlle. Souris Chantante of the principal theatres at home and abroad. We will perform ‘Le Lac des Grenouilles,’ and ‘Le Vieux Rat Polisson,’ ‘Opera bouffe,’ in two acts. My cousin, Herr Bullfrog, will be the conductor, I know.”

“And I,” said the Toad, “who am not so personally attractive as you others, must, I fear, finally retire from the world altogether, and betake myself to the silent system of conventual obscurity in the

centre of some huge stone. But, before doing so, I will pawn the precious jewel of adversity, which I still wear in my head. Can any one tell me where I am likely to get the most money advanced upon it?"

The Newt shook his head, and the Frog croaked a bar from Verdi's "I Lombardi," in a gay and even insulting tone. It was evident that they had no respect for an old lady's misfortunes reduced to so contemptible a shift.

The Little Fish said nothing; perhaps he had nothing to say. At all events, he could not say it, if he had; for he was not a "talking fish." But he thought, that when the last drop of water should fail, he would certainly die a miserable death, and he silently gasped "a prayer for rain," and commended himself to the mercy of an all-wise and all-powerful Providence.

While the Newt, the Frog, and the Toad were thus closely communing together, there came by some mischievous boys, and one of them spying the Toad (for the Frog crept nimbly aside, and the Newt crept into a crevice), threw a heavy brick, which appeared to crush her entirely. They then went on their way, laughing and whooping, to school. The Frog and Newt came out, after the sound of the urchins' voices had died away, and recommenced their conversation.

"Just what I expected," said the Frog. "A fit ending to such an ugly, slow, useless old thing. I always said she would come to grief with that wonderfully 'precious jewel' of hers, of which she was continually prating."

“ I can assure you,” observed, in turn, the Newt, “ that I for one never thought her other than a complete nuisance and a bore. I am glad, for my part, that the nasty, spiteful, venomous hag is gone. Some folks are not fit to live. It’s lucky that we are going to move, for her remains will certainly poison the well.”

This character given to the Toad was neither charitable nor fair ; for she was a harmless, obese person, who never did any one any injury in her life. We are happy to record, that she was only inconvenienced for a few years until the well was cleared out, when she obtained her liberty.

At that moment a shadow darkened the speakers and their abode. Down came a long-necked heron with heavy flapping wings, and the Newt, having crawled at the moment three parts up the side of the well, which, to say sooth, was not very deep, was improved off the earth in a twinkling, and carried wriggling in mid-air to be swallowed at leisure as a *bonne bouche* and alterative by the lordly fowl.

As soon as the Frog had recovered from this second alarm, he said :—

“ Well, he’s gone, and perhaps it’s all for the best ; for there will be all the more water here, until I have completed my arrangements. Besides, I never could really esteem such a crawling style of friend. How about the aquarium now ? But I never believed that any of those disgusting mortals, idiots as they are, could be so ridiculous as to found a hospital for him.”

Back came the urchins from school. They had got

a half-holiday, and approaching the well stealthily, they peeped into it again to see if there was any more fun. The Frog was so busy reckoning up the bad qualities of the Newt, and considering the improbability that, had he lived, any one could have been found to do anything for such an elongated pretender, he did not perceive his danger until it was too late. He was literally caught on the hop, and the boys who could not reach him otherwise, cruelly flogged him to death with some boughs which they had picked up on the road.

The Little Fish only remained. You can imagine what a stew he was in. He nearly swooned outright, when the idlest urchin caught him in an improvised hand-net made of a dirty pocket-handkerchief tied to the forked ends of a stick, and put him into a small green can.

“This monster will certainly boil me,” thought the Little Fish. But the can was furnished with air-holes, and the Little Fish breathed more freely through his gills than he had done for some time; and he again commended himself to the will of Providence, with but slender and fishy hope, it must be owned. Presently the boys took him to a beautiful large pond, and put the can into the water. They amused themselves for some time with looking at the behaviour of the Little Fish, who lay still at the very bottom of the can, awaiting his fate. At length one boy pushed the other, and they soused the can somewhat deeper in the water than they intended. It was a grand opportunity for the Little Fish. Out he shot with a whisk of his tail, and darted like an arrow into the

deep recesses of the pond, where he met with a number of companions, to whom he modestly narrated his escape—of course merely by dumb show, after the manner of fish, *à la fin*, as we might say.

He told his tale so often, and was so fêted and flattered on account of his presence of mind and daring (as if he had any of the latter, poor little fellow!) that at length he grew extremely conceited and proud. He thought that his wonderful escape was all owing to his own cleverness and resources. As he was boasting of these one day as usual, quite forgetful of all around save his immediate admirers, a huge Pike, who had marked him for an easy prey, made one rush at him, and swallowed him up, story, vain-glory, arrogance, ingratitude, and all, and he was no more seen among fish.

“*De nobis fabella narratur!*” It is thus with men. “*L’homme propose et Dieu dispose.*” Of course we should make a good use of our opportunities, when they are sent by an Almighty hand. To-day the poor man gets a living, to-morrow the rich man fails. But whatever we may do, or whatever may be done with us against and above our will, be assured that we can count on nothing for certain; that the finest schemes may be crushed, and the poorest, and humblest, and smallest creatures swim, while the jaws of Fate are always agape to swallow the insane boaster, who deems himself so clever, that he can afford to be forgotten of Heaven.

But the truth is, neither Heaven forgets, nor the Evil One, who hovers between earth and sky, or lies

concealed in the rushes of the deep waters. It is better to live even in shallows, if you put your trust above, than to disport amid the treasure-chambers of ocean itself, without gratitude to the Divine mercy, and devoid of constant faith.

SO VERY HUMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE PHANTOM IN THE STREETS.

The houseless poor,
Whom the poor succour, such as keep no dog,
Nor currish servants, dust-holes for their crusts,
Nor wash their trenchers' greasy scraps away;
Large-hearted, mean folk; generous, petty souls,
Who something from their margin yet bestow
On shivering outcasts more forlorn than they,
Those without seats at Natures's lowest board,
Whose sheets are mists, whose blanket yellow fog,
Beds the bare earth, and coverlet the sky—
But for such aid how many more would die,
That none know how they live; how life in them
Still feebly lurks from morn to ghastly eve,
From eve to haggard morn.

It was nearly twelve o'clock on a wet and windy night in London, in the month of August, 18—, and but few were out who could help it in that usually popular thoroughfare, the Strand. We might occupy pages in describing, after the school of the inimitable Mr. Dickens, what a wet night in London is; but then we could not do it like him; and as many

of our readers live in London, most of them have been there, and in foul weather too: and, finally, as all of them live somewhere, and have probably seen some town or other on a rainy night, and therefore need only imagine a larger town, a dingier atmosphere, more wet, and wider discomfort, in order to picture to themselves London on such an occasion, we shall not attempt to furnish a word-photograph of the scene, however well or indifferently it might be executed. A young gentleman of "fashionable and prepossessing appearance," so far as one could judge of him, who had just issued from his chambers in Garden-court, Temple, was proceeding westward at a rapid pace on his way to one of his clubs, the Kemble. He paused at a cab-stand near St. Clement's Church, and looked hard at the dripping drivers without eliciting a movement on the part of one of them; and so apparently altered his mind, and determined to walk, although unfurnished with an umbrella, an article which we may mention *en passant* he very seldom, if ever, carried. Inky spots from the dye of his hat already began to drip upon his nose; but he cared nought for the rain, and thought, probably, if he thought anything about the matter, as follows: "The cabs there are nearly all Hansoms, and the seats are, doubtless, damp, if not sodden with wet; and as for that solitary four-wheeler, the prospect of turning poor cabby out of his sleeping berth is certainly not inviting. He is slumbering with the windows shut, and the reek of mouldy capes, coarse tobacco, and onions, would be overpowering, as soon as one could sufficiently

arouse the wretched being to cause him to tumble forth mechanically, and mount his wet box, in a state of blasphemous, vehicular, sixpence-a-mile somnambulism. Poor devil! Let him sleep, and dream of a gorgeous paradise of gin-palaces, where all the fares are on a reckless scale of Haymarket-to-Cremorne extravagance, where even cherubs are counted in as extra passengers, and policemen and summonses are unheard of and unknown." Such in reality was his train of thought as he took stock of the cabs on the stand by St. Clement's Church, and sturdily concluded to walk on. The theatres had just closed, and no shops were open, save those sacred to coffee, eel-pies, china bowls full of green apples stuck in the window, shell-fish, and tobacco. Our hero had passed Goodwin's, that still even then celebrated, dingy oyster-warehouse, where some of the choicest spirits of the age have sat far into the morning—the old "Chronicle" men, when it was a newspaper, Charles Dickens, Douglas Jerrold, the lamented Thackeray, and how many more? Perhaps, such a place was hardly ever graced with so goodly a company as might be constituted of the various literary, journalistic, legal, and parliamentary celebrities whom we have seen there. Truly, a strange dirt-begrimed retreat, open till any hour of the morning, and now shut up, at any rate as an intellectual resort, for ever and a night. What has not been penned and planned there? What flowers of thought, and wit, and fancy have not wreathed that rickety parlour, together with its dense cigar-smoke, until it was as richly decked, at least in imagination,

as a bower of the Muses and Apollo, ornamented by the hands of the goddess Flora herself? Dear old Chloë and neat-handed Phyllis, jealous of the comforts, as of the attentions and demands of your separate respective customers and favourites, were ye not also there, nimble of tongue and frying-pan, ready of gridiron and repartee, and jokes and songs? How strong-minded and man-like you had become through constant chatting with your guests on equal, nay, sometimes superior, terms! How well do we remember when the stout old mother sat knitting in that sacred back-parlour, and the thin old father reading his newspaper when his day's out-door business was done, while the daughters cooked for, talked to, quizzed and rallied authors and journalists, politicians in and out of parliament, artists, philosophers, and wits; men, too, who have since become judges of the land and ministers of state, and whom it were invidious now to name. All is over. The old folks are dead and gone, and the young grown old and scattered—who knows whither? But it was a strange place after its kind, perhaps as strange as any that has existed since the sign of the Mermaid was painted by some peripatetic limner of the Elizabethan period. Long before "Pickwick" was written, that old house was rendered notorious by a less pleasing association, of which the old people, at least, seemed almost, if not quite, as proud. For thither the murderer Thurtell and his associates and victim were wont to repair. There, possibly, the former planned his atrocious deed, and frowned upon his cowardly and cringing accomplice, Hunt. Well,

after all, Time has long ago glazed, and varnished, and mellowed the remembrance of that celebrated crime. One would not sup the less merrily in Holyrood Palace or Berkeley Castle for the thought of still more atrocious acts once perpetrated there. Besides, has not antiquity been known to consecrate the most flagrant assassination in the eyes of the rigid denouncer of an Orsini or Berezowski in these later times? The quaint, old, dingy shop is long since closed, buried beneath the countless oyster-shells of the past, as utterly as if it had never been. Where is the singular remnant of humanity, that eccentric Caliban, hight "Alphonso," as wild and preternatural in appearance and belongings as any of the most abnormal creations of Mr. Dickens's most imaginative mind? A being whose language was chiefly an inarticulate growl, who slept on a cellar-shelf, who never put off his ragged vestments, nor washed the mask of dirt from his rugged face. Such was th   minister of those virgins of molluscos fame, and such as he was, he crept to Billingsgate and slunk back every morning, for full thirty years, unknown and without a name; though a species of tradition whispered he was once a gentleman, a man of education, and well born. His real story not even his employers ever knew. Where is the gifted "Ephemera," the glory of "Bell's Life," that most eloquent and classical writer, of such low-lived habits and tastes, who charmed the public for a week, and then the public-house charmed him, so that he would disappear and return coatless, vestless, and shoeless, to be refitted, and a pen put in his hand again, wherewith to coin fancy,

and with it gold, to relapse into bestial intemperance again?

But whoever might be revelling at this extraordinary establishment on the present occasion, our hero passed its yet unclosed door untempted and unmoved, because unmindful of the attractions therein, at least upon this occasion. Otherwise, he was by no means

Parcus dearum cultor et infrequens.

But he walked quickly and steadily on, bound for a different haven in the storm. He had already passed four "gents" arm-in-arm, singing a cheerful bacchanalian ditty, asserting perennial devotion to the charms of a certain "Nancy," on a second floor; he had also met six or seven libels on womanhood, whom his rapid pace deprived of all opportunity to accost him, save that one stopped short and sent after him a volly of semi-articulate, and certainly most superfluous abuse; also a brace of jovial Templars; item, one poor, thin, plain sempstress returning to her comfortless home; item, a reporter hastening with copy from a public meeting at St. Martin's Hall; next a man with an illuminated hat inviting the public to participate in the prurient comicalities of the Coal Hole; also at divers corners five policemen bent on levying black-mail, and one ditto talking to a female on a door-step, and doubtless thereby fulfilling the duties of his calling; and, finally, perhaps about a dozen other night-birds on the wing—when he suddenly came face to face with an "object," and as suddenly halted and looked intently at it, as if it were a bleeding nun, or the

semblance of an absconded washerwoman, who had not sent back a fortnight's linen at least. For be it known, the "object" which stood before him was a something in female clothes, or more properly rags. What was it? And who and what was he whom we have thus described, and who is thus pausing to gaze at it? The "object" was a beggar girl, presenting a truly squalid and deplorable appearance. The gentleman was Arthur Aubrey, then a resident in the Temple, though of no profession, a young fellow of some means, whose father had recently died, and who was engaged to be married very shortly to a beautiful girl named Blanche, an orphan without money, and a governess. On seeing him, the squalid beggar-girl, who was barefooted as well as in rags, started back, and seemed to shriek, only the sound was inaudible. Then, after a brief pause, she turned and fled swiftly away without a moment's hesitation. Mr. Aubrey took to his heels and pursued her. Certainly it was no "love chase" that! Let us endeavour to describe the being thus pursued. The ruins of a discarded servant-of-all-work's bonnet stuck to her dirt-coloured hair, and her clothes clung to her, as if conscious that they were past pawning for the price of a single glass of gin, and that they could only continue awhile to escape the teeth of the mill, or the last rottenness of the sewer, by holding on to her attenuated frame. Her eyes were bleared and glazed, as with intense suffering, and two hollow black and livid rings around them spoke of ill-health, and possibly brutal usage. Yet she was very young, and there was, under the

circumstances, a painful suggestion of beauty and intelligence in her aspect. Shall we add that there was an occasional expression approaching even a hint of latent goodness in that small oval face, whose almost death-like whiteness gleamed through its mask of dirt? One moment, you could not help thinking of a child that had cried itself to sleep, and awakened with its little features stiffened and unwashed. She had the peculiar forlorn and pensive look resembling in the opposite sex that of a religious zealot of the Father Ignatius type, or of an ascetic clergyman who had tried his constitution severely by excesses at college before entering into holy orders a new man. Thus, too, an insensible female Bacchante will sometimes resemble a dying Ophelia, and we have seen an exquisite picture of the latter strangely but powerfully suggestive of the expression of a female victim of intemperance. This being fled rapidly; and but for her worn-out slippers which flapped on the sloppy pavement, and—hear it, ye votaries of fashion!—but for a distorted crinoline dangling round her lean form, she would certainly have escaped. There was something eminently ridiculous in such a pursuit. So Mr. Aubrey thought; but on the other hand, the girl had bolted like a hare, and it is a kind of sporting impulse to pursue anything which runs away from you. But surely he knew that wretched ghastly being? Yes, they had met before. Suddenly, she crossed the Strand somewhere beyond the Lyceum Theatre, and ran up a street on that side. Ha! there is no outlet. She is caught then. Sullen, crouching, and with head averted from the pursuer, she

.

stood like a scarecrow on a half-cultivated field at night, animated by the wild and gusty storm into motion, and the semblance of life. Truly, there is much in dress, and we do not wonder that ghosts always stick to it. By force of rags alone, a scarecrow reminds us of humanity, and humanity in turn may come to suggest an effigy put up to frighten birds from a field.

“So you see, you silly girl! it was no use to try and get away from me,” quoth Arthur Aubrey good-humouredly, as soon as he recovered his breath. “Come, why did you scamper off like that? I am not going to give you in charge to a policeman. Don’t be afraid.”

The girl gave no answer.

“Come, tell me what you have done with the money and clothes which you had—let me see—only a fortnight ago. What, all gone! And where is the poor baby?”

She started and hoarsely muttered something which sounded like “At home.”

“Well, you have a home then now—that is something. But tell me where are the clothes? Why did you not go to Birmingham, as you said you wanted to do?”

She again muttered to the effect that they were stolen from her.

“Well, well,” said Mr. Aubrey; “I see it all now.” And he spoke the truth. “Here! take this;” and he whose charity had been imposed upon gave her a handful of loose silver, and bade her take care of the poor child. “Above all, my good girl,”

he said, "do not trouble yourself to run away when you next meet me in the Strand. I shall neither injure you, nor notice you. There go away—no thanks!" It was a strange compressed glance of awe and admiration which that child of shame and misery shot aslant at Arthur Aubrey, as she slunk away—let us hope to seek her poor infant in the rookery where she had left it. For she loved the child—poor, pale, blighted blossom as it was—and by a strange contradiction lived for it, after the manner that she did live, and lived for it alone.

A fortnight before, Mr. Aubrey had met this creature in the Strand. Strange to say, she was out in the full blaze of a sunshiny day. It was her habit during some three or four months at least to do this. Many of our readers may have beheld this very mid-day apparition, sometimes bonnetless and always in hideous rags, not far from the dark fetid arches of the Adelphi, as if she had just issued from them. At night, many such creatures are abroad, but rarely is one so wretched seen by day. The police did not apparently meddle with her. Probably they did not like to touch her. That there are chartered beggars in some localities must be well known to every Londoner. We presume that these generally pay their footing to the guardians of order, and possibly even this creature did. It would be hard to say. But it would have puzzled the stoutest myrmidon of the Force to have arrested her. Not to speak of her noisome contact, her "clothes" would not have resisted a rough grasp, and then she could not well be knocked on the head

and dragged away, in the interests of Society, half-naked and bleeding at noon, through the Strand. She always came out about that hour, and remained but a short time—probably sufficient to collect a day's subsistence by tacitly receiving the alms dropped into her hand. She had evidently not the honour of the acquaintance of a certain benevolent marquis, at least at the period when our story commences. Arthur Aubrey, struck by her horrible appearance of destitution, had one day actually stopped her, regardless of a crowd which gathered round them, and questioned her. Nay, he told her to meet him again, and kept the appointment at dusk as punctually as a lover. Alas! possibly she had once made such an appointment, and kept it once too often. She told him her story, such as it was. She had her child with her then. She had friends in the country near Birmingham. "If she could return, they would receive her. But she could not walk thither, could not go in those rags." So Arthur Aubrey gave her five sovereigns and a letter to a lady of the demi-monde, asking her to bestow some cast-off clothes on his protégée; and the lady destroyed the peace of mind of her maid for six months, and left a thorn rankling in her mind for the term of her natural life, by the excessive generosity in which she fulfilled Arthur's wishes. Certainly the "creature" did not want a pink silk slip for her own wear, and might have dispensed with lace-trimmings to her linen. But the donor was a very fine lady indeed, with a right good heart for all that, only that she was utterly ignorant of the poor and their wants; and she did not see the

“beastly creechure,” as Mrs. Frisby, the lady’s-maid, with more truth than she usually lavished, called her, and so she sent her a sovereign too, which was commuted into a shilling by Tomkins, the footman, who didn’t think missus ought to be robbed like that! The result of all this was, that the “creature” indulged in a fortnight’s consecutive debauch, after which her landlady turned her out with two black eyes on a rainy night, the very one on which Aubrey had again met her, the baby being taken in by an intemperate female friend, while she went out once more to beg. So she had lied the first time when she said she had no home, and lied also the second time when she said she had. But there was some shame still left lurking in the depths of her soul, where a ray of goodness seldom penetrated to give it life. Had Arthur Aubrey threatened her she would either have sullenly defied him, or told him a different falsehood, and tried to impose on his foolish charity again. Let her go, at least for the present. We can promise our readers, although they may not be much fascinated by the first introduction, that they shall certainly meet her again during the relation of this history. Fact is said to be stranger than fiction, and certainly we have no occasion to borrow anything from romance.

For the present, we will revert to Mr. Aubrey and his affairs. He, at any rate, was not the heartless libertine, if such there were, who had seduced this forlorn outcast from the paths of virtue, and the blessings of home. Alas! there are men in London, prosperous, affable gentlemen, by scores and hundreds, whom Society is proud to recognise, and on whom

beauty and fashion smile, practised and habitual scoundrels, received even at Court (would that Her Gracious Majesty knew them for what they are!) who have peopled our thoroughfares with these living ghosts, these painted tawdry beings,

Whose souls being buried in lust's grave, at night
Their mortal frames walk forth, reversing Death.

Can the monsters who do this feel remorse? No! If they were capable of repentance, they could not do it at all. Ghastly shapes and cowardly fears may assail them, when sick, old, and dying. But the ruffian who feigns the divinest passion of our nature, or who promises marriage, in order systematically to deceive and to betray, and who can leave his victim to perish body and soul in the streets, is beyond the pale of humanity and devoid of any redeeming trait. Yet mothers will still smile on the reformed rake, and fathers invite him to their board, intrusting to his foul keeping the happiness of their beloved children, and even not unfrequently an only daughter, the one lamb in their domestic fold. It is nothing new or strange! Occasionally the Divorce Court startles the world with the revelations of the after-hours of such a match, and the married brute is revealed to the world unchanged in manners as in nature, even by the mature aid of hypocrisy, from the selfish, cruel sensualist that he was in his "wild bachelor days." Arthur Aubrey was not this style of man; but we confess ourselves not sorry to have recorded this little episode in his career, since our readers' indignation will, in all probability, hereafter be greatly aroused against him. We would fain show the better side of

his nature, and make a favourable impression at first. We would also in some degree portray his general character and principles. He was thoughtless, impulsive, extravagant, but generous; a libertine, but not wicked at heart. He had never wronged or ruined a woman, but he had grievously sinned in morals. His vices were manly, his virtues exaggerated. He gave and lent indiscriminately, and thought himself, because his flatterers and parasites continually told him so, an excellent fellow, with good taste, discretion, and judgment in the choice of acquaintance, &c. He denied himself nothing. Why should he? He was young, healthy, and full of capacity for enjoyment, to which the worldly means were in his case added. He had culled the fruits of pleasure as yet without satiety or remorse. He believed in mankind, and being vain and thoughtless, and giving himself no trouble to seek and court real and valuable friendships, he was surrounded by false friends, and a crowd of well-dressed, plausible persons, who were in truth the very scum of humanity and refuse of mankind. But we must reserve our further description of our far from faultless hero for our next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

To tremble at

The thought of change, like summer birds that doubt
 Their summer, if a moment they have felt
 One zephyr chill, or missed one early leaf
 From the green forest's universal bloom ;
 Yet to believe like a blind man whose steps
 Are led by his own child—in joy to weep,
 In grief to smile beside the one we love ,
 To put a girdle round the universe
 With but one arm clasped round a slender waist,
 Two human beings in one angel blent,
 One star reflected in the eyes of both,
 To smile back joy to Heaven.

WE were endeavouring at the close of our first chapter to describe the character of Mr. Aubrey. A spoilt child of fortune, he had never learnt the value of money, and therefore even his profuse and eccentric alms-giving was less estimable than it might otherwise appear in the eyes of Charity herself. He was much liked by his “friends” and acquaintances, that is, by the society in which he moved, and only intensely hated by a select few. These were two or three individuals whom he had found out, persons whom he had most liberally patronised, but whose rapacity, or notorious profligacy, had at length opened

even his eyes, causing him to decline their intimacy or further acquaintance. That some persons dislike those who have benefited them, as much as those whom they have injured, is, we fear, a remark of wide application. And the point where the change from fictitious love to unfeigned hatred, from pretended respect and affection to real envy, malignity, and contempt, generally occurs, is exactly where the benefactor ceases to be able or willing to do more, or the recipient can dispense with further services. Hereafter, we shall have occasion to observe a large increase to our hero's at present by no means numerous circle of enemies and detractors.

Mr. Aubrey had "a taste," as it is called, for music and the fine arts generally. He belonged to two "literary and dramatic," as well as two or three yacht clubs. He was a good rider, fencer, and shot, wrote poetry, and had published a play, or dramatic poem—of course "every one," by which we mean his numerous circle of friends, said that the latter was rather an improvement on Shakespeare than otherwise. But then, "Shakespeare would not do now," they added. "We want deeper thought. Look at Browning and Tennyson." As those gentlemen did not happen to be present, it was difficult to follow the injunction; but every one looked very wise, which answered the same purpose, and as Shakespeare said nothing, judgment was allowed to go by default. Mr. Aubrey had been the owner of a magnificent yacht, which was wrecked off Falmouth just prior to the commencement of this history, through the negligence of the jolliest and best-meaning of master-

mariners, whom Aubrey had taken out of prison, and placed upon his sea-legs. In recompense for this, the devoted seaman took to toasting his generous patron's health so often in that patron's own wine and brandy, that his sea-legs frequently exaggerated their nautical duty, and the vessel was left to the guidance of the next in command. In addition to this, the worthy captain took to smuggling in his patron's yacht, which enabled him to exhibit his gratitude to the owner by some appropriate presents. The fact is, that Aubrey had received intelligence when at Naples, which induced him to hurry home, leaving the vessel to follow him, so soon as wind and weather would permit. The captain's orders were to proceed to Southampton and meet his owner there; but it suited him better to stop at Falmouth, so he made for that harbour; having resolved, by the connivance of a friend there, to send in a bill for a new boom, and thereby convey the idea that he had lost one in a gale off Falmouth. But his intentions, however good, were baulked by the result of a little indiscretion, which occasioned the real loss of boom, vessel, and all. The grateful fellow went on shore as soon as he arrived, leaving the yacht riding at single anchor. The mate, who had doubtless another mate on shore, followed his example, until all the crew had slunk away with the exception of a man and couple of boys who had been shipped at Vigo. About two A.M. it blew a hurricane. Let us do the captain justice. It was fine weather when he quitted the vessel. So the yacht went after her crew, that is, on shore, and so ended the history of Arthur Aubrey,

Esq., as a yachting man, and vice-commodore of the "True Blue Club," whose members were bound to have been at least one thousand miles from London in their own vessels.

The assistance rendered to his vessel in her breaking-up moments was touchingly expensive. His friends and well-wishers in the port, after indignantly and insolently refusing in his name the advice and assistance tendered by the admiral and dockyard authorities, hired a steam-tug at forty pounds an hour to pull the yacht off the rocks, and made such a breach in her bottom, or rather side, that she must have sunk had she floated. To provide, however, against this danger, they broke up her compartments with axes at low water, and filled her with casks and barrels bought at any price from a neighbouring brewer and nearly all the publicans in the county of Cornwall. This little process caused her deck to burst up, and finished her career very summarily. A broken piano-frame, carried to a music-shop in the town, was repaired by order of some one or other, and cost Aubrey forty-five pounds; and every other bill was in proportion. A marine artist painted the wreck, not by order; but the attention was so considerate, that about a fortnight after, on presenting the picture to the owner of the wrecked vessel, he got a bill accepted, under peculiar and distressing circumstances, by our foolish friend for two hundred and sixty-three pounds seven shillings and tenpence. It made the artist, whose father, or uncle, or son-in-law, or somebody or other, was rescued from self-

destruction thereby, grateful for ever; so much so, that he never was known to come near his benefactor again, being doubtless anxious to avoid recalling to his mind the distressing loss of the yacht. There was a pilot engaged to take the vessel to the port of London, had she been saved, but the event did not come off, owing to her total loss. This man dying soon after, his widow* brought an action against Aubrey for two hundred pounds for detention, and recovered it, as the widow of a pilot ought.

Mr. Aubrey's nominal income at this time was some three thousand a-year. It was said that there were valuable mineral lodes under that part of his property which was in Cornwall, the remainder being in the adjoining county of Devon. His father's will was a curious one, but of that anon. Suffice it to say that he had only a life-estate, and was bound by curious restrictions, penalties, and forfeitures. His father was a rich shipping agent, who would not bring him up to his business, being determined that his only son should be Lord Chancellor, the old gentleman having an immense respect for the Law. *Now*, perhaps, the distinction has lost some of its

* This would suggest doubt, but for an explanation. A pilot has a most instant remedy for the remuneration of his duties, and very properly so. In this case Mr. Aubrey had compromised the matter at once by paying the man a large portion of his demand. But the latter neglected somehow to erase the debt from his books, and so Aubrey had the pleasure of paying nearly twice the amount originally claimed. We knew a similar case, in which the pilot who had brought a dismantled yacht round from the south coast to London, made an overcharge, but accepted a portion of the claim, and his widow recovered the whole amount nearly seven years afterwards, the man having lived nearly six years afterwards, and the law allowing a year to the executors.

charms, at least in the eyes of scrupulous men. "Where is the boasted integrity of the British merchant now-a-days?" cries in revenge some pert young barrister of the period. But this is a subject which we are by no means called upon to discuss.

In person Arthur Aubrey was tall and decidedly good-looking. His hair was dark, with an auburn tinge, his eyes dark blue, his hands and feet small. His face was oval, and there was a melancholy look about him when in repose, which had a great charm for the majority of the female sex. His portrait would have been very useful in advertising for a wife. He had a craving for novelty and excitement, was much spoilt and petted by the ladies, and pursued an object, when he had set his heart on it, with all the eagerness of a child.

He is now in love, desperately in love, and we may add, honourably so. Although much beneath him in present social position and wealth, he had never thought of his darling Blanche save as a wife. Small credit to him! He was free to marry whom he pleased and whom he could. Moreover, she had at first firmly and determinately rejected his suit, and removed herself beyond his ken, and, consequently, his power to renew his advances. He had found her again by accident—just found her at the period when our history begins. And he is now making off to his club to pen her a love-letter, such a letter as none save the votary of a real passion based both on the senses and the imagination could write. Our readers shall judge for themselves :

“Kemble Club, August 20, 18—.

“MINE OWN, MY BELOVED BLANCHE,—In three days I shall be with you to claim you as mine—yes, mine for ever. Cruel little tyrant, to have deferred it so long, when you have confessed that you love me—love me. I like to write these words, and repeat them aloud. Before I knew you, I do not seem to have lived at all, so different are my sensations, so changed is the aspect of everything. Ah, dearest Blanche! how severe a trial it has been to me to let you remain, in obedience to your commands, with that sordid family, whose treatment I can only, in some degree, forgive; because it was there that I met you again, my beloved, mine own. What a noble sense of duty in you to stay until the period of your service shall have expired! *Your ‘service,’ yours to them!* Great Heaven! I cannot bear to think of the probable result, had I not met you, had you remained there amongst those brutal, ignorant, purse-proud wretches. You would have faded like a spring rose, Blanche, in that horrible atmosphere of selfishness, vulgarity, and pretension. And now, within three short days, I shall rescue and claim you as my own. My friend, Lady Margaret Courcy, will call for you, and take you to her home, where you will at least find sympathy and appreciation, and whence I shall shortly bear you away to mine. Now, don’t destroy my little plot, my small plan of revenge. Lady Margaret will call, as if to engage you as a ‘companion,’ in their sense. The great contractor’s daughters, who would give a year of

their lives to make such a county acquaintance as 'her ladyship,' will overburden her with attentions, and speak enviously and depreciatingly of my Blanche. And then you will be sent for, and be clasped to the breast of my dear friend, who will lead you to her carriage, and bid them good afternoon in her stateliest style. I think I see it all, like a scene out of a play. And then, then, my Blanche will be restored to her proper rank. Alas! no. She should be a queen! an empress! What a vain, inconsiderate being am I to deem myself worthy of such grace, such beauty and accomplishments! Blanche! Blanche! Are you sure that you do love me, that you will love me always? Society will pay its court to you. Flattery will seek to turn your head, and win your heart from me. No, no! I have no fear of the truth, the constancy of my patrician, my haughty, beautiful Blanche. She has said that she loves *me*, and Blanche never can love but once. Do I not remember her own sweet, noble words, when, with impatient presumption, I first flung myself at her feet, and was rejected with maidenly dignity, my suit baffled, but not spurned. I remember with what ineffable sweetness she replied, in answer to my breathless inquiry, if she already loved another: 'No, Mr. Aubrey, I will not deceive you, or even question your right to ask. You have paid me the highest compliment in your power to offer, and I am grateful, although, permit me to say, beyond measure surprised. I do not love any one, and never have possessed for any more than a friendly regard. If I seem melancholy, as you are pleased, with generous interest, to sup-

pose that I am, it is not because my affections have ever been engaged. But, believe me, should anything so improbable and so little to be desired ever occur, the heart of the poor governess can only be bestowed once, and for ever. And now, deeply thanking you for your preference, suffer this interview at once to terminate our acquaintance and commence my esteem! Under these circumstances you will only wound my pride if you renew the subject.' Such was the substance of what you said, whilst I was vainly urging you to listen to my suit. When, within three days, I ventured, tremblingly, to present myself at the house again, you had left the plain but worthy persons under whose roof I had found you so singularly a second time. I did not tell you then where I first met you and fell in love with you ; for I loved you at first sight, Blanche. You had gone and left no clue, no trace to your importunate and almost despairing lover. Providence was kind indeed. I saw you accidentally a third time. I had the ineffable delight to render you some small service, and to hear from you, at a time when you were softened by affright and peril, that you had thought of me since my rash and sudden proposal, and not unkindly. A gleam of hope shot into my breast. I determined this time to wait. I wooed you with bashfulness and silence, as though you wore a Peri's wings, and were ready to fly out of my sight on the utterance of an incautious syllable, a word too loudly spoken. I watched your smiles, each expression that flitted over your face. I approached you as gradually as a hermit, dwelling in the forest

fringe of some eastern plain, might seek to gain the confidence of a wild and shy gazelle.

“ At length I was rewarded ; I saw a smile brighten for me on my advent. I knew that I was regarded as a friend, as one at least not to be shunned. I redoubled my assiduities, but took care not to break the spell of delicate forbearance. Then I absented myself for a short time, bidding you a respectful farewell, and saying nothing which might lead to an assurance of my return. I thought that I perceived a shade of regret on those delicate features, as if a cloud had passed over the sun, or a window-curtain been momentarily drawn, whilst I was gazing on some beautiful masterpiece of Guido or of Raffaele. I returned soon from my hiding-place in a neighbouring village, again to visit on business the coarse and vulgar millionaire, whose dwelling you illumined with the rare effulgence of your charms. I watched you whilst I talked to him. I saw a flush of pleased recognition, and my heart beat wildly whilst I spoke huskily and incoherently of strata, and inclines, the cost of engines, the depth of shafts, of faults, and croppings out, and royalties, while you alone occupied my thoughts, and flitted like a white-robed nymph through subterranean passages of fancy that should have been peopled only by sooty gnomes. What a fool old Grimshaw doubtless thought me, and how blind I considered him, and to think that his daughters should have continued so ignorant as to what brought me to Cokely Manor ! Well, at length I spoke again, and you confessed that I was not indifferent to you, and that evening I returned Miss

Jenny's angry frown with a smile of triumph, and met with glorious indifference Miss Georgina's languishing stare. Was it excusable that I had been so very civil to these amiable spinsters in order to be near thee? Did I not in creating a tender interest in their gentle bosoms, thereby avenge many a malignant insult, many an act of petty paltry spite towards my beloved? In three days, oh, joy! I shall be free to visit you under auspices how different, to clasp you to my heart as my affianced bride, to ramble with you hand-in-hand, like children free and unreproved, in the beautiful demesne of my noble friend. Oh, pure and exquisite joy! Am I—am I worthy of it? No! no! yet I will try to be; my love for thee will purify and exalt me. Last night I had a dark and dismal dream—I thought we were wandering together in the sunshine. The birds were carolling amid the green trees around, and I gazed into the depths of your eyes, as if to find out the source of that mysterious light beaming from within, which I have never seen in those of any other human being. I am told, dearest, that it is the peculiar light betokening genius of the highest order—there! do not look vexed, if I say that I think you possess that genius, that you might be a Malibran and a Ristori in one, if fate had so favoured the world as to have caused your *début* on the stage, for which you were destined once, and from which with sacred instinctive modesty you so early shrank. To return to my dream. Suddenly, as we wandered thus, I thought that a film grew over your eyes. As I gazed in alarm, your face and form seemed to fade rapidly, until all colour

had passed away, and you looked like the phantom of yourself. I thought that in your features I could trace an ineffably sad and pained expression. As I looked round me for aid, I fancied that the sky grew leaden-hued and then grey, and the trees yellow, while their sickly leaves heaped the ground, and eddied in the moaning wind. A few moments more, and your cold form eluded my grasp and glided from my arms. The ground was covered with a sheet of drifting snow. The naked trees were whitened with the burden of winter. Then all became indistinct and dark, until I groped about in midnight. I spread out my arms and folded them empty upon my breast; for you were no longer there. And then I awoke. Foolish fond dream! How it chilled my soul, and even now weighs on my spirits! Shall I interpret it? We shall live and love and grow old together, like that couple in the beautiful song of Burns. And now, dearest, good-night! Angels attend thee!"

Even more in this strain followed, but our readers have probably had enough. Our Law Courts show what even sober, worldly, middle-aged "parties" will write, when they have quaffed the delicious nectar of the rosy god.

Our friend Arthur was a very romantic young gentleman, and very much enamoured. He felt all—more than he wrote. Having at length finished and sealed his letter, and dropped it among the letters in the box of the club writing-room, which were lucky to escape being reduced to tinder by the contact of such an inflammable missive, he felt a considerable

longing for supper, and it being too late at the club, and a hot baked potato at that moment recommending itself to his excited fancy, he betook himself to the Cave of Harmony in Covent Garden, and thence to the Temple, and to bed.

Do not be disgusted, fair readers. It is only your anxious, unhappy lovers, who lose their appetites. Your lovers in Arthur Aubrey's ecstatic but healthy state of mind can enjoy their bodily comforts with delicious zest; and why not, pray? Since Blanche had been engaged to our hero, and all had been arranged for their speedy union, it was wonderful how her appetite had improved, even in the distasteful company which still surrounded her, and how regardless the saucy creature became of the sneers directed against her by her "young ladies" in consequence, which would have sent her to her own room hungry and in tears, but that a few short months before she had plighted her faith to Arthur, and she was far too happy to weep at their brutality.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOVERNESS IN A RICH FAMILY.

Something between our servants and ourselves,
 That hired gentility, that sweet young face,
 That never-tiring patience doomed to spite,
 Meaner than words could picture. Her scant meals
 Had choked the resignation of a saint ;
 For they were seasoned with malignity
 Of rich vulgarians, paupers still in heart,
 More brutal than the menials who out-do
 Their own base natures, copying their masters.

MR. GRIMSHAW was a self-made man, and lived in a mansion like a nobleman's, but not as a nobleman lives. He was one of a class which modern England delights to honour, a successful contractor and a mighty railway engineer, though he was entirely ignorant of scientific engineering, as he was of geometry, and, in fact, of all science. He was also a great coal-owner and iron-master in the land. Mr. Grimshaw had risen from the underground ranks. The precise manner in which he came up to the surface was by no means generally known. Had he pitched all his fellows out of the "bowk," or iron receptacle for man and material that travels up and down the pit? Was he an admirable economiser of

truth, or, to speak plainly, a talented liar, totally devoid of all scruple, modesty, and conscience, and had he a knack of asserting his own pretensions to get on in this world at great risk to his comfortable status in the world to come? These are admirable modes of achieving success in their way, and may lead to the first place in a village or an empire, the presidency of a republic, the chair of a parish board of guardians, or the representation in parliament of a midland manufacturing town. The fact is, however, that Mr. Grimshaw had a sort of gift for finding out veins of coal, and getting hold of them to the partial if not total exclusion of their legitimate owners. He had also a genius for getting into partnerships and disposing of his partners and their claims. Perhaps, during the interesting period when he went a "coortin'," or courting, the identical lass in the north who became the Mrs. Grimshaw of our narrative, he studied the business habits of that remarkable bird the cuckoo. The first partner he had was the owner of a coal-mine, to whom he had served his apprenticeship as butty, and then viewer. The natural sagacity or luck of Grimshaw had developed itself in tracing and following certain dips of the coal in his employer's mine, and had won for him a kind of local reputation. One day he presented himself to the gratified and unsuspecting owner, and boldly asked him for a loan. The other good-naturedly asked him what he meant to do with it. Grimshaw hesitated, or seemed to do so, and scratched his head reflectingly. He then disclosed the fact that in the exercise of his detective or perceptive faculty in the search for coal,

he had found out a wonderful secret. He knew, he said, where a fortune might be made at a moderate cost. He could obtain, for a mere song, the goodwill and plant of a deserted shaft, in comparison with which a gold-mine, or a diamond-mine, was nothing. Pressed to reveal the locality, he hesitated, and went away; but when recalled to the subject, spoke to the following effect: He owed all in life he possessed, he said, to his employer, and was accordingly grateful. He had saved a little money, and he had, since they last met, got the promise of a loan sufficient to carry out his scheme. But the grateful fellow could not forget his benefactor. He had, therefore, determined to yield to his gratitude and remembrance, and to offer him a share in his splendid discovery first. All he asked in return was a share—a small share, say a fourth or fifth—in his owner's original pit, the Great Brambleberry, and he in return would give him a one-half share in the profits of his new discovery. The offer was accepted. Articles were forthwith drawn up, and Brown and Grimshaw were thenceforth partners in both adventures. The Great Brambleberry remained what it was, or rather increased greatly in value under Grimshaw's management during the next dozen years, but the Little Hemlock for once baffled even his sagacity. In fact, after a few thousands were spent on it, it was abandoned as before; but Brown and Grimshaw remained partners in the Great Brambleberry undertaking. Subsequently Grimshaw launched forth into many enterprises. At the time of the commencement of our history, Mr. Brown had long since entered a surface

stratum of clay as a final resting-place from all worldly cares, and especially from his partnership with Grimshaw, who had latterly treated him with great harshness and rude contempt. During the old man's life Grimshaw had gradually got a third, then half, and then nine-twelfths of the Great Brambleberry mine. After Brown's death he easily acquired his son's remaining shares in the concern, at a time of great panic and depreciation, when Grimshaw himself felt much alarm, or said he did, and offered to sell his own nine-twelfths at a fair valuation to the son of his late patron. At the time of our readers' introduction to Grimshaw, he is part owner in a dozen mines, and shareholder or director of nearly as many flourishing concerns. If Grimshaw has a weakness, it is for a lord—if he has an overwhelming aspiration, it is for a baronetcy. He is always attended by a number of young civil engineers, whom he employs in all directions, but never pays. Many of them have been his pupils, and are very promising. So, indeed, is he. It is wonderful how he sucks their brains, and moulds them to his purposes. Woe to them if they rebel; for it is no trifle on the threshold of the profession to offend the "great Grimshaw!"

Grimshaw, in his "castle," surrounded by these young fellows, always forcibly reminded us of an ogre. Now and then one would disappear, shot off by the monster, like a pellet out of a steam-gun, to Spain, Sweden, South or New South Wales, America, or Iceland, to report on a projected railway or a mine. As we missed him, we thought of the nursery rhyme, and whether his "bones were ground" to make Grim-

shaw's bread. For the rest, Grimshaw was sometimes familiar enough with his body-guard. He would order one to sing now and then to please him, or another to dance, or insist upon the most bashful young fellow of the lot making a speech after dinner. Now and then he would place his hand affectionately on the shoulder of one or other of them, and, lowering his hoarse and unpleasant voice into a sort of devil's whisper in a sick-room, give every one an opportunity of admiring those mighty lessons of wisdom which Success was good-naturedly imparting to a disciple; whereas, the truth was, Success was learning all it could from the disciple.

We do not by any means affirm that all the self-made successful men, whom England honours, are of the Grimshaw class; but that he represents a certain type of them there is no doubt whatsoever. Some day it will be delightful to read the biography of such a man. He much desires it to be written, and to furnish the notes for it himself. We shall hear how he went to a Sunday-school, and lent money at interest to his companions; how he never drank beer until he was twenty-four years old; and made a model traction-engine out of a broken tea-kettle and an abandoned go-cart during his sullen but mechanical puberty. Grimshaw is esteemed pretty generally as a rough diamond. His coarseness is looked upon very favourably by several very refined personages; and his savage irony passes muster for estimable candour and frankness, in the eyes of superficial observers. There is great power in the man, wonderful energy of self-assertion and greed. He

will occasionally spend a thousand pounds in a single entertainment; but is an awful screw to his family, fond as he is of them. Such is the man, grasping, cunning, ostentatious, and avaricious; brutal as the associations of his origin, unscrupulous as the means of his success.

It is in the bosom of this man's family that we find Blanche Lavigne, and certes it is a hard resting-place for any one, not to speak of a beautiful young orphan lady. Mr. Grimshaw owned a wife, four daughters, and three sons. Mrs. Grimshaw was a very simple person, but not very amiable. The Misses Grimshaw ("two," as the papers speak of young ladies at court or a ball) were not very comely, but evil-minded and ambitious, as only persons of their breed and in their position can be.

There were, however, two much younger sisters, quite children, of a far better nature. One, at least, the youngest, was a charming child. The fact is she was not too old, at the advent of Blanche as her governess, to catch the sweet infection of her kind heart and refined and delicate manners. The three young male Grimshaws were bear-cubs, of whom the youngest and best was under the sole guardianship and control of the gamekeeper. Mr. Grimshaw did not shoot, but he stood in a kind of awe of his keeper. It was not from early associations, for Grimshaw had never been on a poaching expedition in his youth. The fact is that he did not exactly know what to do with him, or expect from him, when he first had him. His butler was for long a source of misery. He did not feel quite so comfortable with

his after-dinner clay pipe in the presence of that potentate, until a certain hard-up lord, who happened to be in his iron clutches, had visited him and borne him company in smoking a long "churchwarden" in the princely dining-room of Cokely Manor. In truth, Grimshaw often keenly studied the behaviour of his victims with a view to the coveted baronetcy and future presidency of the Civil Engineers. When philosophical, he would say, that he had found out that a lord and a pitman were "both of the same bit of stuff," and had much the same tastes, motives, and dispositions.

For the two elder bear-cubs, they were both carefully graduating in the genteel vices of the day, and were grafting monkeyism on the original beardom or bearhood of their dispositions in a way that afforded the highest satisfaction to old Grimshaw, who wished his sons to be perfect gentlemen, so far as tailors, horse-dealers, opera and sing-song, cigars, slang, affectation, and perfumery could make them; although he was by no means liberal in the allowances which he made to enable them to live like gentlemen. In truth, Mr. Grimshaw had a great wish that they should become fashionable "sharps" rather than "flats," and chuckled amazingly over a report of the elder having won some heavy bets from a college chum, and the second having sold an unsound horse to a young gentleman whom he met at the cottage of a tutor by whom he was for some months vainly "coached" for his examinations at a seaside retreat in Cornwall. The elder rather patronised "the little governess," and bestowed on her his flattering attentions. The

second confined himself to practical jokes, such as burning her dress with a fusee, or wrapping his terrier puppies in her best shawl. Of the two, she rather preferred the attentions of the latter to those of the former.

It was the third day after Arthur Aubrey had written that love-sick epistle, which we hope has made a due impression upon our lady readers. The Grimshaw family has partly assembled at breakfast. There is the great senior who is reading his letters, the maternal Grimshaw who looks vastly perturbed and angry, the two elder sons, and the four daughters, that is the Misses Grimshaw (two) who had come out, and the two Misses Grimshaw who hadn't. These, with the manager of a neighbouring colliery who had ridden over early with a report, and a brace of the young C.E.s aforesaid, who were watching every look and gesture of the great man with awe and admiration, made up the party.

"Extraordinary conduct!" quoth Mrs. Grimshaw.

"Really, ma," bleated the eldest daughter, a scraggy damsel, who looked as if she had been buried like a potato or kidney-bean somewhere in a covered-in coal-shaft, and grown painfully extended in the direction of a crevice for light; "really, ma, it is awfully cool of her, and I wonder that you stand it as you do. Only think, pa!" this was addressed to her great parent himself, "Miss Lavigne has not thought proper to make her appearance downstairs at this hour."

"What's that?" growled the person appealed to. "Send her away, then. There's more of her sort to

be had for money ;” and he chuckled abruptly at the thought, and relapsed into the sordid calculations in which he was engaged.

“But, pa, she’s going. Her time is up this very day. Only we requested her yesterday to stay, until we are suited with another.”

“Perhaps,” suggested bear-cub number one, rather good-naturedly for him, “little Lavigne is ill. She may not,” he added, “like the thoughts of leaving our family.” With that he pulled up his shirt-collar. It was plain enough what he thought. “Shall I inquire?” he added, rising.

His elder sister nearly shrieked.

“Oh, Fred!” she exclaimed, “how can you demean yourself so, to inquire after the health of a governess? What next?”

As she uttered these last words, she became aware that the object of her remarks had entered the room, and stood looking around for a chair, which, massive as it was, in accordance with the rest of the hall furniture, lately purchased at a bishop’s sale, she was allowed to lift from some distance to the table without the slightest offer of assistance. The two young civil engineers, it must be owned, were deeply mortified, but they dared not for their lives get up and assist the governess in that house. We know a lame little scrofulous nobleman of high descent who would have risked breaking his neck to reach that chair, and we know a wealthy peer, who has the reputation of being a gallant man, who would have willingly knocked him down to do it. But the latter would have contrived to insult her in the operation of hand-

ing that chair far more than the mute assumption of her inferiority manifested by the brutal rudeness of the whole Grimshaw *boutique*, father, sons, and all.

Lovely, fresh, and radiant, Blanche looked like the ideal incarnation of a beautiful May morning, as she fairly shone upon that sordid assemblage gathered there. We must except, as far as possible, the two young engineers, who couldn't help it, and had their future bread in view.

She was dressed in a simple light-coloured cotton wrapper, her mass of rich dark billowy brown hair gathered neatly together, and restrained by ribbons of nearly the same hue. She looked like

Aurora [not Aurora Floyd]
Or the goddess Flora,

as the song hath it. Her hair, our lady readers will have observed, was not "blue-black," that wonderful sensation colour lately imported by the novelists, and which we previously, in our ignorance, should have attributed to the effect of some "invaluable dye." In person, Blanche Lavigne was above the medium height; her figure was exquisitely rounded yet slender; her eyes were gloriously, brilliantly black; her nose, chiselled as by a Greek sculptor, was slightly aquiline; her lips full and scarlet; her contour girl-like, but affording a promise of womanly perfection. There was something tremulous in her glance, and a sweet timidity in her expression and attitudes, mingled with a species of innocent assurance wonderfully fascinating to behold. Her voice was low and sweet, but clear as a silver bell. Such was Blanche Lavigne,

as she stood a few moments with one fairy-like hand (she wore six-and-a-quarter gloves) on the back of the chair, apologising for her lateness. She either had not heard, or would not hear, the remark made by Miss Grimshaw just as she entered.

"I hope, madam," she said, "you will pardon my absence from prayers this morning. It is the first time I have ever been absent; and, as I go to-day, I have had my little packing to attend to."

"You will be pleased, Miss Lavigne, to remember," said Mrs. Grimshaw, grandly, "that my two youngest daughters, Miss Victoria Hamelia Dudley Grimshaw, and her sister, Miss Violetta Rosina Haraminta, have been waiting twenty minutes for their usual instruction in the pianmer, and that this is geogrifey and 'istory day, as well as persition drill and the classicks."

Having delivered herself of this speech, which we have endeavoured to spell somewhat like her pronunciation, Mrs. Grimshaw placed one hand over the other across her broad and deep bosom, and kept beating time with the open palm of that one hand upon the red knuckles of the other, as if pausing for a reply.

"Indeed, madam, I am very sorry. I am quite ready now," said Blanche, relinquishing her hold upon the chair, which she had placed opposite a cup of weak tea long since poured out, and a plate of bread-and-butter, thick but not plentiful, which was what she usually had for breakfast, even when the table groaned under a profusion of viands. "I do not want anything this morning, I assure you"

(as if she had been pressed, poor girl! to take anything). "Come, my dears," she added to the younger girls, "if you are ready;—it will be our last lesson, you know," and Blanche sighed; for she did not at all like leaving little Violet, poor child! whom she really loved, to the mercy of all the bad influences around her.

"So you have made up your mind to go to-day, Miss Lavigne?" said Mrs. Grimshaw, increasing the rapidity of her hand-thumping.

A bow was the only answer.

"I insist upon it that you take your breakfast," said the lady of the house. "You must not say that we starved you, you know."

"Besides, ma," observed Miss Grimshaw, thoughtfully, "she may want a breakfast soon."

The face of Blanche flushed crimson, as it well might. The two young engineers shifted about uneasily on their chairs. Mr. Grimshaw looked up inquiringly from his letters.

"I say, come, Georgy," quoth the elder bear-cub, "that's coming it rather strong, eh? Draw it mild. Such a pretty gal, as our governess, ain't likely to want a breakfast; no, nor nothing else," he added, in a lower tone, "for long, if she likes."

"Oh, Fred! if *you* are her champion, *I* have nothing to say," was Miss Grimshaw's answer. "But I dare say ma'amselle is not hungry. She has doubtless had something with the servants."

So saying, with this, as she deemed triumphant stab, Miss Grimshaw gathered up her muslin, and sailed majestically towards the door.

Blanche turned and trembled. A tear was in her eye, a response quivering on her lip. Miss Grimshaw looked round to note her success.

"I suppose, ma," she called out, "Miss Lavigne will want a testimon— I mean a character, before she goes. I believe that early rising is somewhat of an essential in these matters."

"Nay, Georgy," said the second sister, Miss Jenny, who had been remarkably silent all the time, probably thinking what she could say more spiteful than her sister, "Mr. Aubrey, our late visitor, can testify as to Miss Lavigne's very early habits on some occasions. He met her before seven o'clock in the flower-garden, my maid tells me, more than once, of course accidentally."

"These insults!" stammered poor Blanche. "Mr. Grimshaw, I appeal to you for protection;" and she burst into tears, a weakness of which she might not have been guilty, but for a certain consciousness that there was some foundation for Miss Grimshaw's insinuations, and that her botanical studies had been prosecuted with unusual ardour during Mr. Aubrey's last visit. It was after her engagement to him; but what did they know of that?

"Pooh! pooh!" was all she got out of her protector. "I advise you, ma'amselle, as being under this roof"—here he looked awfully towards the two young civil engineers—"to take care what you are about. Mr. Aubrey is a dangerous person. You should have avoided having your name mixed up with his. I trust that no impropriety has taken place here. You can do what you please, miss, when

you have left my house—— Eh! what? tears? Come, young woman, I am only speaking for your good. Young persons should be cautious, you know, cautious.”

During this speech Blanche had left the room sobbing violently.

“What is the meaning of this, mother?” said Mr. Grimshaw, almost fiercely, to his lady. He generally spoke, from long habit, in that tone to her. In early life he had beaten and kicked her into subjection, but respectability and gentility had long intervened for her protection. “Has any one been caterwauling in my house, madam? Or is it some of your tricks, Georgy?” he said to his eldest daughter, who had just re-entered the room.

The only reply vouchsafed by that young lady was a toss of her head, and a few words, among which “thing” and “wretch” were distinctly audible.

The majestic mother, spouse of our successful and self-made Colossus, arose, saying with dignity:

“If that young person applies for a character, all I have to say, Mr. G., is, that I shall tell no lies. There ain’t a respectable governess to be got anywhere now-a-days.”

By this she referred, or seemed to refer, to some remembered epoch when respectable governesses were to be got; though a stranger might have thought, and every one who knew her might have been certain, that she could have had very little to do with the class in earlier life; unless, indeed, as scullery-maid in some household, where, as she would have said, a governess was “kep.”

Blanche dried her eyes, took a rapid glance at Arthur's last effusion, tried to smile, was successful, and devoted herself to the instruction of her young pupils for the next two hours. She was then summoned to the presence of Mrs. Grimshaw, who, with great pomp and solemnity, handed her a five-pound note, her last quarter's salary, and asked her if she had got any one to fetch her boxes. The meaning of this was that she would not allow any of her servants to carry them to the lodge, and it gave her the opportunity of adding that she hoped, if Miss Lavigne had engaged any one, it was a respectable party, as she did not like any low people there. To this Blanche timidly responded that she believed a lady would fetch her.

"A lady!" quoth Mrs. Grimshaw, with an injured air. "Then I suppose, *ma'amselle*, you have got a place. However," she added, "it will be my dooty to see her; though, of course, if she likes to take you without a character she can do so. Only, understand, you will please not to refer to me afterwards, if you should happen not to suit."

At this moment, the noise of carriage-wheels and a loud ring at the door startled Mrs. Grimshaw from her propriety. "Oh, *ma!*" screamed Miss Georgy, bursting into the room in a perfect flutter of excitement, "here's Lady Margaret Courcy come to return our visit, and we are such frights to receive her." So they were; but in a different sense to what she intended. Now, it must be told, that Blanche had no idea of suffering Arthur's little scheme of vengeance to be carried out, if she could help it. But the fact

is, she had no power to do so. For a few moments, Mrs. Grimshaw stood uncertain how to act. Her mental vision took a rapid survey of her wardrobe—of a magnificent structure called a cap, in which she looked like the great-aunt of Vertumnus; of a mauve-coloured satin robe, brilliant as that in which Mr. Buckstone might figure in his impersonation of a female character—and then the door opened, and the gorgeous Grimshaw servitors announced the Lady Courcy, a very plainly attired old lady indeed, who might have been in morning attendance on the Queen herself, so far as the moderation of her costume was concerned. This venerable gentlewoman, whose white hair and pleasing regular features were most prepossessing, albeit a slight air of severity was habitual to her, advanced with dignity and bowed low to Mrs. Grimshaw and her two daughters, for the amiable Jenny had followed her in.

“How do you do, my lady? Will your ladyship be pleased to take a seat? I am sure, your ladyship, we are very proud of this early visit; so kind, my lady. We are quite ‘hong dishabill,’ your ladyship,” uttered Mrs. Grimshaw. “My daughters were just speaking of your ladyship. My love” (to Georgy), “just ring the bell. Her ladyship will stay and luncheon with us.” Having thus delivered herself, Mrs. Grimshaw thought of Blanche, and said, with cold severity, “Miss Lavigne, you may go. I have no more to say to you.”

“But I have,” cried the old gentlewoman, holding out her hand to the escaping Blanche. “The truth is, I have come for my young friend here. I fear,”

she added, mischievously, "you will hardly forgive me for running off with her."

No flower in the wished-for cap of Mrs. Grimshaw, which bloomed at that moment on the coverlet of that matron's couch, unconscious of its owner's desires and regrets regarding it, exceeded in depth and brilliancy of colouring the crimson hue that overspread her face, on hearing Lady Courcy's announcement. The young ladies looked at each other with a most expressive glance of dismay and wonder.

"Am I to understand, ahem! my lady, that your ladyship wants a governess—I mean a companion?" at length stammered Mrs. Grimshaw.

"‘A companion,’ certainly yes, for a short time," replied her ladyship, glancing laughingly and affectionately at Blanche, who in her turn coloured, but with a very different hue. "My dear!" turning to Blanche, "are you nearly ready?"

Mrs. Grimshaw was uncertain what line to adopt. She was not a woman of fine tact, but she felt instinctively that somehow or other Lady Courcy was most favourably disposed in relation to the governess. The intense hatred which she, Mrs. Grimshaw, cherished at that moment towards Blanche was rather greater than that felt by Queen Eleanor for Fair Rosamond. That jealous historic Fury proffered her victim a choice of deaths. Blanche would have had none at Mrs. Grimshaw's hands. She would have flavoured the poison with senna, and jagged the knife—no! she would have strangled her with her own hands. Indeed, in speaking of it to her daughters afterwards, she said, with appropriate

action, "I could have throttled the hussy, that I could." But as it was, she said :

"Indeed, I am delighted to hear it, your ladyship. I am sure we are so sorry to part with dear Miss Lavigne."

Lady Courcy was a woman of severe integrity, and felt she had somewhat compromised her strict notions of truth, by her first speech, intimating that she thought they would be sorry to lose Blanche. So she said : "I believe that this dear girl and your youngest child are tenderly attached to each other."

A few minutes ago, had any one in the house, save the master, dared to suggest this, Mrs. Grimshaw would have resented it with fury as an insult. As it was, she remembered that little Violet had been crying at Blanche's approaching departure, which she was expiating at that very time in the school-room with very red ears, and a long sum in addition to pore over ; so Mrs. Grimshaw immediately rang for her. The eldest Miss Grimshaw was a woman of decision. Had she been a Vivandière in the first Napoleon's army, we might perhaps have read of a female marshal of the Empire, quick, daring, resolute, and intrepid, as all or any of those worthies. A mighty effort had restrained the outburst of her passion, and left her face like a distorted smiling mask with real eyes looking through it, fortunately with glances which could not kill. Without hesitation she seized her cue and flung herself into Blanche's arms, sobbing as if her heart would break. It was a masterly move ; for she longed to cry, and

give vent to her spite, and in this manner she could do it.

Her sister's emotion took a milder form. That young lady intimated, with considerable composure, that it was a great consolation to her particularly, and she was sure would gratify her papa, to know that their dear friend Miss Lavigne was so fortunate as to obtain such a home. Here she sighed, and then she added naïvely, "We shall not lose her altogether, because I hope we may be permitted sometimes to see her at your ladyship's house." Then poor little Violet was brought in to the general rescue, having been fiercely threatened and cautioned as she was dragged down-stairs, and—O wicked mamma Grimshaw! for you yourself had left the room to fetch her—had also been bribed not to let the cat out of the bag. She, poor child! cried real tears of sorrow at parting. Blanche could not help asking if she might see her now and then, to which there was a responsive chorus of, "Oh! Miss Lavigne, we hope you will come often to see us," and then they all fell to kissing poor Blanche, and Mrs. Grimshaw rang the bell; and when the Cokely Manor "Jeames" appeared, that lady actually said these words, which we blush to record: "Tell the coachman he need not put the horses into the britzska for Miss Lavigne, as she will accompany the countess." So earnest, thoughtful, and affectionate had they all become, that when, after declining lunch for the fifth time, the countess rose to depart, Blanche, like a dear little fool, actually began to forget the injuries and insults lavished on her, and to fancy that they did, some-

how or other, mean at least a portion of what they said. And so they did, a very small portion, perhaps; for they began to regard her as the friend of the great county lady; and their remembrance of the "governess" was fainter before Blanche left, than any one who did not know human nature could possibly believe; and in one thing they especially deceived themselves, and became less hypocritical every instant. They very nearly forgot that they had treated her unkindly and brutally in the least. And it is a fact that had Blanche only stayed that day and evening until bedtime, they might have begun really to like her. For Blanche was very loveable at all times, and especially so as Lady Courcy's protégée and friend.

"But you know, mamma," said Miss Georgy, speaking of the affair afterwards, "we could not have acted otherwise with a governess, and at twenty pounds a-year, too," quite forgetting by whom the price of her services was fixed.

As Blanche rode home with the countess, the latter attempted once or twice, as delicately as possible, to draw her out with regard to her treatment at the Grimshaws. The truth is that she was tolerably aware of the facts from her own observation, as well as Arthur's indignant comments. But Blanche dexterously evaded the subject, or could only be induced to talk freely and fondly of her poor dear little pupil Violet.

There are families and families, governesses and governesses. We ourselves have known one of the latter class, who drank neat spirits secretly; and

another who was fond of romping with the men-servants. But for a beautiful, sensitive, pure-minded, accomplished, and delicate girl, it is too frequently a sad and painful career, a protracted martyrdom ; it is too often to run the gauntlet of petty annoyance and unfeeling insult, alone in a crowd, unpitied, and only noticed by contempt and uncharitableness ; with the consumption hospital or a garret for the goal of a life without sympathies and an existence without hope.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NUPTIAL KNOT.

After the ceremony, which was touchingly performed by the Hon. and Rev. Sidney Slowcoach, assisted by the Rev. Chasuble Pyx, and with a full choral service, the happy pair, so soon as they had partaken of a sumptuous déjeuner furnished by Messrs. Bridecake and Orangeblossom, of Bond-street, left in one of Mr. Longacre's most elegant new "broughams de nocés" for Paddington Station, whence they proceeded to the Marquis of Alicompane's seat at Everton Toffy, proffered for the occasion with the exquisite sweetness of disposition for which that accomplished nobleman is so eminently distinguished. After passing three or four days in that delightful abode, where art and nature have exhausted themselves in order to offer every attraction and solace, even to personages of the most exalted station, it is understood that the newly united couple will leave England for a tour through Switzerland and Italy, and afterwards proceed by the Dardanelles in his lordship's splendid schooner-yacht the *Eglantine*, built by the eminent Messrs. Skyscraper, of Cowes. We may add that it is expected that they will arrive at Odessa, that magnificent monument of British magnanimity and moderation, about the month of February, on a visit to his Excellency Count Hango Tigrevieff, the celebrated Russian general and diplomatist, whom it may be remembered is a near relation by marriage of Lord Craven de Yieldingham, the successful negotiator to whom we are indebted for the sudden and humane termination of the late distressing and disastrous war.—*Morning and Evening Gusher.*

It is very odd how Society will continue to plot, in order to inake those which ought to be the most delightful moments of life the most uncomfortable. Not to speak of the awful ceremony called a dinner-party, where the general demeanour of the company is often quite as effectively iced as the wine, and

where one starves in the midst of plenty, like a modern Tantalus in tight boots overwhelmed with superabundant drapery, with head and shoulders showing like those of a despairing shopman, who has unrolled mountains of feminine attire upon the counter of his magnificent firm; not to mention a fashionable "drum," or ball, where the atmosphere of the dazzling salons resembles that of the Black Hole of Calcutta—just consider our customs at a wedding! The bride is magnificently attired, and stared at almost into hysterics, after being laced nearly to fainting point. Then she is ruthlessly disrobed, to be again squeezed into a travelling-dress, and whisked away on a fatiguing journey to a sufficiently distant place, possibly undergoing rapid sojourns at hotels, as if the newly-married couple were pursued by detective officers, or the Furies were hot on their track. How few tempers can possibly stand the test of a honeymoon conventionally administered. It is all very well to talk about knowing the worst of each other, at first and at once; but how often a bad beginning makes a bad ending. If a pair could only impose upon each other with a month's amiability, they might keep up the delightful delusion to the last. But how ill-omened a commencement it is for the husband to have to swear at drunken post-boys, or to be bothered at a railway station, to find fault with extortionate landlords, to storm at imposition and discomfort everywhere; and how sad for the young wife to be tired, and worried, and flurried, and jolted into headaches and ill-temper. Then there is the frequently fatal mistake of confining two persons to

their own society for a month, upon which we need not enlarge. How they find out each other's weak points! It puts us in mind of a preliminary round of sparring in a prize-fight. No, no, we do not approve of the Siamese solitary confinement principle outside, any more than inside, prison-bars. Let people who are destined to live together for the rest of their lives commence as they mean to continue; that is our maxim. As for rushing over the Continent under such circumstances, it is the wildest delusion, too often comprising every discomfort, beginning with sea-sickness and ending with fleas. Our opinion is that a British newly-married pair should commence their wedded lives in a neat and sensible manner *at home*, and that honeymoons should be annual if not perennial treats; not mere flashes in the pan at the commencement of disunion.

"A very pretty argument," quoth our cousin Ada, "in order to mulct us poor women in a shabby manner of our few privileges. Before we sink down into ordinary humdrum existence, you surely need not grudge us a month's holiday."

"A month?" we replied; "'tis very suggestive of the treadmill, or of a sentence to imprisonment for that period. Why should we be more thoughtful of our convicts' comfort than our own? We have improved their condition vastly, why not——"

A hand was here placed over our mouth, which we gallantly saluted of course, a proceeding which, for the time at least, effectually closed our remarks on the absurd customs which make the first four weeks

or so of marriage too frequently an attempt to be ecstatic in the face of overpowering difficulties.

The marriage between our young lovers took place in London, at St. George's, Hanover-square, and was duly recorded in the "Morning Post." As that shabby notice, warning, or admonition of "No cards," had not then crept into practice, cards were sent amongst others to the Grimshaws; not, we must say, by Blanche or Arthur, but by a certain pert but pretty and good-tempered lady's-maid, who, on Blanche leaving the Grimshaws, had given notice in the most independent style, to the great disgust of the ladies of that family. Susan had been an early discoverer of the love affair between Aubrey and Blanche, and had made up her saucy mind to live with the young couple. There was no harm about the girl, who was of an affectionate and steadfast disposition, but she cherished very strong hatreds as well as attachments, and had her own views of things, and stuck to them; there was, in truth, a considerable amount of "servantgalism" about her, mixed with excellent qualities of head and heart. Though perfectly honest, and never helping herself to anything, she hated a mean "missus;" though averse to ill-natured scandal, she would talk about the neighbours, what they did and what they had, and what they said, and what was said of them. If masters and mistresses only knew what servants do say and think—ay, and know about them! But they go on, as if they were surrounded by automata. A clever, faithful, and confidential servant is a character constantly occurring on the stage. One reason

is that he aids the plot so essentially. Such an assistant would be invaluable to a man of the world desirous of being well posted in the affairs of those with whom he came in contact. We do not say that such assistance would be either dignified or proper. A true gentleman knows barely anything of his neighbours' business. He is neither curious nor prying. But the vulgar, not being preoccupied with thoughts of a high order, are at once telescopic and microscopic in their observations of that which does not, or ought not, to concern them.

Mr. Aubrey's marriage was a private one—i. e., it was remarkably public, if we consider the number of strangers who gazed eagerly at the ceremony so dear to female curiosity and so provocative of female excitement. What crowds of Englishwomen will wait in the street to get a peep at bride and bridegroom! It matters not whether they are ill or well sorted, old or young, handsome or ugly. The interest is the same, the remarks only differ. "Well, I never! What a fright!" or, "Poor thing! she does look well, doesn't she?" "It's quite clear she has *him* for his money;" or, "He's married *her* for her fortune, I should think." "What a guy!" "What a love!" "What a brute he looks!" "Well, she is a duck!" It matters not—a marriage is a marriage; it is the triumph, the "gaudy day" of womankind; on that day man succumbs, and generally looks foolish; he is the prisoner of war on parole of the sex; he bows to the majesty of womanhood. Of course he may be a fortune-hunter, dissembling and lying at the altar, but

though in masquerading guise, he still does homage at the court of Hymen that morn; he is caught that day, though he may never be tamed; wild as the courser of the desert, he still receives the mark as surely as if he were, as he may be, the most domestic animal that ever meekly submitted to his fate. *Habet!* he has got it; he is no longer a sprightly bachelor or sullen monozoist, deriding the golden fetters or the rosy bonds. Look at him, feminine world! take your fill of staring, daughters of Eve! matrons and maids, ladies and seamstresses. Gaze at him, slipshod girl! with or without the forgotten beer; crossing-sweeper and apple-woman, schoolgirl and apprentice, "marchioness" of drawing-room or scullery, it is your brief and joyous privilege! Be he sheepish or unconcerned, humble or defiant, doubtful, repentant, or exultant, there he is! Is he recalcitrant, or does he hug his chains? No matter, look at him; look him in or out of countenance; smile at him or with him; applaud or insult him—there he is; he is yours for the nonce! Behold him, whatever he is, submitting to the yoke, stepping, skipping, or stumbling over the line, walking under the triumphal arch, yielding obeisance, offering fealty; behold him, we say, crowd, squeeze, push, stand on tip-toe, stare! He is the vassal of Hymen, your own particular deity and idol; in a few minutes he may drive off, or walk away with undiminished arrogance, creation's lord and master. Never mind, you have seen him submit; he may turn out a Petruchio, a wife-beater, a matrimonial monster, or even a felon; he may leave his bride at the church-door—

nay, will he not thereby only furnish you with the delicious food of scandal?—he may be an incipient Bluebeard, or a practised poisoner; he may break every vow, rend every tie, shatter the temple which he has just built up into a thousand fragments; or he may be a phœnix about to rise from the ashes of bachelor existence, the pink of perfection, the topaz of the tea-table, the very spaniel of the domestic hearth-rug, or, better still, the great, tame, obedient Newfoundland dog, ready to fetch and carry, to go out when bidden and return when summoned! All this signifies nothing to the occasion, save as you are pleased to speculate upon it, with all that feminine tact and discretion which you know so well how to exercise in another's case: it has nothing to do with the one great fact that you are assisting in the ceremony of the submission of another male to the rod of Hymen, be it wreathed with flowers or twined with snakes. Mark him well, note his every act, glance, and gesture, follow him with your eyes, until he is out of sight! Are you not all priestesses of the solemnity, petticoated flamens of the mystery, eager witnesses of the act, or deed, for good or for ill?

And if this be your temporary portion in the bridegroom, what of the bride? Is she not decked out for your admiration, your sympathy, your pity, your envy, your criticism, your amusement, your delight? Diminutive charity girl! whose eyes are starting from your head like little dirty stars shooting madly from their spheres, are you not part proprietress of her, her veil, her orange-flowers, her Honiton lace, her blushes, or her pallor, and those of all

her bride's-maids, be they two, four, eight, sixteen, or any number? Is it not a spectacle for your especial approval or condemnation? The feelings of the whole female world are represented by, and entranced in, that ceremony. We believe that a female hermit, or a Bushwoman, would catch the sweet or bitter contagion, would understand the ceremony at a glance, and pause at, if she did not rush to the church-door. How women like a marriage! "Here she is!" "There she is!" "She looks pale!" "She looks red!" "Poor thing!" "Ain't she happy?" "She's crying!" "She's not!" "What beautiful lace!" "Well, I would have had something better than that!" "She's pretty!" "She's plain!" "She's ugly!" "She's frightful!" "What a May-pole!" "What a dump!" *Continuez, mes dames! Faites votre jeu, mes demoiselles! Le jeu est fait.* Thus it goes, and will go to the end. Could any woman, under any circumstances, resist having "a good look at the bride?" It was a startling announcement that there are no marriages in Heaven. All the more reason, dear ladies, and you, my little charity girl, who are taught to read your Bible, why you should make the most you possibly can of them on earth.

Well, our young lovers were united, as all young lovers should be; and as few are, in the bloom of youth, and in the possession of worldly wealth and comfort. There were not many invited to the wedding, but those present were select; and the Misses Grimshaw (two), who had come up to their town residence in Langham-place, would have given

much for the distinction. For, did not a lord give away the bride, and was not Lady Margaret Courcy there? Above all, was there not a paragraph in the "Weekly Flunky," and one in the "Court Crawler," and might not their names have been in these? It is one of the severest punishments to some persons to find one whom they have despised and ill-used at some former period of their lives become rich, celebrated, or powerful. If you have treated a humble and unknown individual very kindly and generously, it is hard to bear a cut from him or her, when he or she has left you far behind in worldly position and advancement. But this pang is nothing to the remorse felt at having snubbed a Garibaldi, an Empress Eugénie, or a Napoleon, before they were distinguished or fortunate. We remember well the lamentations of a certain well-known *littérateur*, very popular in the *demi-monde* and in second-rate London society, and sometimes admitted to higher circles, who knew Napoleon III. when they both visited Lady Blessington at Gore House. This gentleman used to relate how he and the prince used to leave together in the evening to return to their respective quarters in the same locality or direction. "Would you believe it," he would say, "I used to make an excuse, and cut his company as soon as I could, he was so uncommonly silent and dull? And now he is an Emperor. Only think, my good fellow!" We could not sympathise with his grief.

CHAPTER V.

MR. STINGRAY, OUTSIDE AND IN.

Soothe to saie, hee was a lyar of grete talente and most subtile conceite; not so much, mark you, in mere boasting and bragginge of impossible things, as in hidinge his craftie desires and pushing himself with a verie constant and selishe purpose in lyfe. Hee was alsoe a most steadfaste hypocrit, not soe religious in himself as in hys discourse with certaine solemne folke of either sexe. Hee was lyke a serpente with two poisons, y^e one swete and poisonous and y^e other verie sharpe and acrid, soche as y^e most leperous distilment of y^e wickedest human harte can alone bee found to furnishe. Soche venome, methinkes, is more dethlie than y^e malise of y^e verie fiendes. For as y^e souldier is better and of more respecte than y^e knavishe cut-throte and thief, so is y^e devile, whose business it is to doe evile, one far more worthie to be considered and of greter respecte than a man who shall doe harme to humanitie and hys fellows in y^e capacitie of a mere hungrie apprentis and discypole of vice—*facit quod amat*—hee does that for lykinge which is Diabolus hys profession and ordained pursuite, wherebye “Old Hornie” hath hys means and comforte of lyfe, or, as I sholde saie, of eternitie, since y^e Devile cannot dye. Thus, that which is in some sort y^e Devile’s businesse, is y^e guiltie man’s delighe—*sibi dedit sortem ratio*, I saie—hee useth lyes as another doth hys hawkes and hys houndes—hee hath pleasaunce and enjoyaunce of hys maize of uglie deceit; whereas Satan worketh harde on principle as it were—*c’est song mestier*—hee is y^e chief grete attourney of Sinne, and provoketh manie causes therebie.—*Roger Gavelet of Calice*, “*His Treatyse on y^e Embezelment and Embracerie of Truthe.*”

AFTER their marriage, Arthur and Blanche Aubrey settled down to live in Queen’s-square, Westminster, where they gave very elegant and exclusive entertainments. At their parties, the wife’s splendid talents as

a musician, and her magnificent contralto voice and singing, drew around them both artistic and aristocratical society. Their soirées were very charming in a true, as well as false, sense of the term. Thither flocked the worthy, as well as unworthy, celebrities of fashionable London life. Painters, poets, authors, and scientific personages mingled with the great and small titled personages, who admired beauty and patronised talent. Had Blanche exercised her will according to her wishes, many would have been banished from their luxurious little salons, who were frequently to be met there. But as these guests were chiefly of the male sex, she did not care to interfere with Arthur's ready invitations. Amongst their visitors was the Duke of Chalkstoneville and Acres, whom she disliked instinctively, and of whom she had heard that he was a very dissipated man; the great Mr. Stingray, a distinguished writer, whom she dreaded, and would have hated, only that in her happiness and innocence she was incapable of hating any one; Sir Harry Luckless, whom she did not dislike, but pitied, as a foolish good fellow led astray. Then there was Viscount Oglestone, who so unmistakably admired her, that she shrunk from his odious look and presence—a sallow debauchee grown careful of his useless existence at the mature age of fifty, who paid particular attention to Arthur, easy fellow, and held him by the button in the Park that he might leer at his wife. The Duke of Chalkstoneville and Lord Tipton and Wednesbury were also assiduous in their attentions. The former invited both Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey to his magnificent enter-

tainments, and the latter persecuted them with his opera boxes and dilettante talk. Personally, the Duke of Chalkstoneville always reminded us of a certain tall beadle of the Burlington Arcade, if we could imagine that tremendous official in plain clothes. But then the duke himself was not always plainly attired, and there is not so much difference between distinguished liveries after all. The beadle of the B.A.'s uniform was more a "livery of seisin," so far as small boys are concerned; the duke's a "suit of court," as it would have been called in the olden time. Possibly, when his grace was gorgeously arrayed in Court attire, the resemblance might have been even more striking. We ourselves never saw the duke save in plain clothes, when he did not appear like a nobleman, or even a beadle of the Burlington Arcade. The beadle on his part was not deaf, like his grace. The beadle lived in or up a court; his grace only occasionally went to Court as "Hereditary Grand Showman of the Chimpanzees," a sinecure which brought in some seven thousand pounds a-year, and as "Principal Stick in Waiting," an arduous task for a deaf and gouty nobleman, had there been anything whatever to do, the post being only worth four thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds per annum. Among these young married persons' female acquaintances was dear old Lady Courcy, the type of a real English gentlewoman, and Blanche's truest friend and protectress. Then there was the good-natured and kind-hearted Mrs. Filmer-Dawson, a more indefatigable lion-hunter than Jules Gérard himself, and an active politician, than whom

none could be more amiable; since she always sympathised with the unfortunate, and befriended the hapless refugee. Lady Madeiraville was a rattling, gossiping matron, of French extraction and manners; full of insignificant anecdote and back-stair stories of Court life. Then there was the dreadful Mrs. Blewbore, a sort of tea-tray Medusa and Minerva in one, who contrived to cram all kinds of clever personages into her dingy drawing-rooms; and who was, without exception, the most malignant and mischievous, as she was the most slimy and disagreeable being in "Society." Her, Blanche tried to avoid, but could not. For be it known that Aubrey had an aunt by marriage, who was a strict ally of Mrs. Blewbore, and blest with a grown-up family, educated abroad, of the most accomplished description, and to them Arthur was very necessary as a stepping-stone to circles in which they could not otherwise hope to move. Mrs. Pushforte was the daughter of an atheistical engraver and reprobate, whom Pushforte had married in a fit of delirium tremens in early life. Old Brown, her father, plied him with "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," secret societies, and gin-and-water, most suspiciously compounded; until one evening he held a pistol to the intoxicated youth's head, and accused him of seducing his elder daughter. The younger and prettier one had already been seduced, and was living with a nobleman, who supplied Mr. Brown with the means of furnishing his house, and finding an unlimited supply of the afore-said gin-and-water for his guests. Since then Mr. Pushforte had chiefly lived abroad in the society of

counts and musicians, demireps, and other "charming people." At length he died at Dieppe of a broken constitution and a puffy heart, and madame brought over her daughters to try their luck in England. As soon as Arthur Aubrey married, she wrote to congratulate him in her own strain on his union with so "charming" a creature as Blanche. For once the intriguing old wretch spoke truth, and at the same time she gained her purpose. Blanche was annoyed by her fulsome flattery; but she could not get rid of her. It was she who introduced the great Mr. Stingray at a *conversazione* given by Mrs. Blewbore, who, by the way, never afforded anything save weak tea and muddy coffee at these intellectual treats. It suited Stingray to visit Aubrey, not only on account of his dinners, but the dukes and lords whom he met there. For Stingray, whose satire of "The Dirt-eaters of Flunkinopolis" had gained him great renown, would himself undergo the severest difficulties to stalk down a lord, and would invest a duke's residence with the craft and patience of a wild-fowl shooter, the arts of a Vauban, the sinuosity of a serpent, and the underground experiences of a mole. The *haut-ton* of the nobility constituted to him an Olympian conclave, which sometimes he would storm like a Titan, and sometimes approach in the guise of the meanest insect. Impudent and humble, cynical and supple, satirical and fawning, by turns, he climbed his ladder of life, clinging to all above, and kicking at all below him at each successive rung of his crafty advance. With undoubted talent, and even genius of a most unpleasant kind, he lashed and

branded the very meannesses which formed the staple of his daily career. But he could be gushing and maudlin enough in his pretended sentimentality, when it suited his purpose.

In person Mr. Stingray was short, stout, and bull-necked. His hair, which was of a reddish tinge, was close-cropped. He was pock-marked and freckled, and wore very wide trousers to hide bandy legs. Let us relate an anecdote of this most amiable personage.

Once upon a time, in the early part of his career, he sought out a nearly starving artist at Rome, a fellow of small merit and less pride. He was the son of an English officer of rank, stern in his repudiation of a bad artist, and worse man. Stingray looked at his pictures, questioned him, and thrust twenty pounds, in Italian coin, into his hand on leaving.

“Botherby, my boy,” said he, “take it! It is half of all I have, until I get to England and make some more. I did mean to stay a month longer among you fellows of the Caffé Greco; but I must now return at once. Be sure and don’t say a word about this little affair. I should have all the fellows here thinking I am rich; and God knows I am not. There, good-bye to you. Ta, ta! Botherby. No thanks” (applying his handkerchief to his eyes). “Of course. There, there! I know you are grateful and all that.”

“Such generosity——” began Botherby, who really was affected at the prospect of the *mezzi caldi* he would imbibe and the dinners he would devour at the Lepré.

"If," rejoined Stingray, "it would do *you* good—and, yes it might—it might, perhaps (*pause*)—to let some of the fellows know that I had aided you, I should not so much mind, when I shall have gone away; but it would be better for your sake to say that I imposed the strictest secrecy. They will think all the better of your heart, if you should mention it. Say that I insisted—as I do insist (*playfully*)—that you should not. But it may do you good, Botherby, to say I helped you; set an example to others, and why should I care what any one says?"

This was uttered as if he had just done something wrong, and defied the world.

"Why should I care? I only want to put something in your way, man. There, keep up your spirits. I will send you another twenty pounds, when I get to England and receive a little amount—all I have to look to in the world, on my arrival. We artists"—Stingray did a little caricaturing—"must help each other, eh? Is not that it? Of course it is."

And the "dear old fellow" wrung Botherby's hand, and begun to descend from the artist's sky-parlour somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Quattro Fontani.

"Hi, Botherby!" he called out to that individual, who had sunk into an arm-chair, considering what he should have for breakfast, and what establishment he should patronise, "would you like me to see the admiral when I return to England? I might do something with him, you know."

Botherby, who followed him down the stairs,

eagerly assented, and they had a few minutes' conversation on that topic.

"And, Botherby," added Stingray, finally, "I want you especially to see little Chatterleigh, the archdeacon's son, you know, from me to-day, and tell him that I am obliged to leave to-morrow and have not time to call. Do the civil for me, in fact. He is a good fellow, and might do something handsome for you, if it were suggested to him somehow indirectly; and if he did take it up, he would talk to every one, and I should not wonder if there were a handsome subscription, and you will be set up shortly, and I shall find you a great painter when I return to Rome. Don't cut poor Stingy, then; *you* don't think I'm so stingy after all? Addio!"

As Stingray descended the steep and dark flights of stairs leading to the artist's wretched abode, his mutterings were somewhat as follows:

"Hem! a stiff investment that. How the fools will talk about it! Dare say I shall get the 'mopuses' back from the old admiral. I'll take care *he* hears of it. Confound the fellow! How his room smelt of garlic. Saw a trap for sparrows on the roof—believe he lives on them, and on what I call street salads. He paint, indeed? Faugh! The beast wanted me to accept one of his 'pictures.' Not such a fool. He would have said he had *sold* one to me for twenty pounds, the scamp, and ruined my prospects as a connoisseur. Wonder whether he will talk. Think he will. Touched him upon the right place. Chatterleigh will tell every one in six hours. Botherby

will get drunk and maudlin on *mezzi caldi* at the Belle Arte or the Greco this evening, and call me his saviour. Some men would not *see* this sort of thing, but I do. I'll give Botherby three months to be worse off than ever, i.e., if he don't get ' *dil trees*,' and die on the proceeds of my touching generosity. Ha! ha! Good thing for me if he does die, confound him! as soon as he has told the story sufficiently. People will say, 'You remember poor Botherby, don't you? Man of good family—son of an admiral—nearly starving at Rome—died last autumn. Well, that eccentric creature, Stingray, did one of the noblest actions,' &c. &c. &c. And the old fellow would be safe to fork out in that case. Shall I go back and offer him twenty pounds more on the nail, to kick the bucket at once? Ha! ha!"

Never was a better investment made of forty pounds than this of the noble-minded and generous Stingray. Botherby told every one whom he knew, and several whom he did not know, constantly for weeks after. Nay, he narrated the circumstance to at least fifty artists at the billiard-table in the Corso that night. We are not quite sure which was more applauded at Rome ere long, the gratitude of Botherby or the generosity of his patron. We don't exactly know what the artist himself thought of his patron's motives; for the former was a cynic in his way, and soured by privation. But at least he knew that another twenty pounds was promised, and he behaved with the greatest discretion and judgment in his observance of Stingray's instructions. When, indeed, he got very drunk, which he did every even-

ing, with the exception of those occasions when he became intoxicated earlier in the day, nature supplanted art, and he would weep over the narrative of Stingray's benevolence in a manner most edifying to behold. And though he sank lower and lower in estimation, save with respect to the praise he merited as an apparently grateful beast, his benefactor rose higher and higher, until Stingray's noble conduct became stereotyped in the minds of the British residents and visitors at Rome. Moreover, in due course of time, various excellent impressions found their way to England and to the wide circle of London society, and the story of Stingray's benevolence was repeated from the boudoir of the Duchess of Mortmainerre (so well known for the extent of her deer solitudes and her sympathy with the enslaved negro), down to the "Cave of Harmony," in a less refined but equally intellectual atmosphere. In the former the story was lisped in the way of small talk with more or less effect; in the latter it was specially retailed, with equal shallowness of purpose, by the enlightened and philanthropical individual presiding over the establishment of supper and of song.

"Yes, dear boy" (offering you a pinch of snuff, and holding one suspended between his own finger and thumb), "you ought to know who sits there, when he comes" (takes the pinch), "which I assure you he does very often, nearly always I may say in the season, the great Mr. Stingray, who wrote, &c. &c., and behaved so generous to the poor artist at Rome. Ah, I see, you know the story. I hope you are being

attended to all right. William, have you attended to this gentleman?" (offers another pinch of snuff.) "Good-night."

Stingray was right, so far as Botherby's immediate cravings and necessities were concerned. Little Chatterleigh gave him five pounds himself, and swore with his most comic oath, that Stingray was the "jolliest old trump, sir," he ever knew. A certain British consul, or general agent and dealer in pictures, curiosities, groceries, coins, and cameos, who represented our noble country abroad, put down his name for twenty scudi, which he never paid. And, lastly, a London tea-merchant and his lady on their travels, actually bought a pair of pictures from the bearded and interesting artist. One of these was the "Pifferari," represented by a man and boy—we need not go from London in order to paint such now—and the other, the "Adoration of the Madonna," consisted of a girl in a coarse blue dress with something like a square napkin partly folded on her head, and with enormous ear-rings, kneeling in front of a sort of doll's-house, fixed in a corner made by two walls. These are the kind of things which some persons go to Rome to paint; and others, fortunately for those who paint them, to buy; a fact even more astonishing. Botherby was a handsome fellow enough, and had he not been a tipsy fool might have married the eldest Miss Hyson, who sketched in the Coliseum, and whose drawings of the Baths of Caracalla, and Views of Pæstum, are so greatly admired at Souchong Lodge, Peckham Rye.

As it was, Miss Hyson was merely provided with

a sentimental regret, which she continued to exhibit until after her marriage and the birth of her first child.

Mr. Stingray's act in itself was kindly enough. What could be more amiable than to relieve a poor artist, and give him the money so much needed by him in his distress? Still, we who are behind the poetic and artistic curtain, know how and why it was done. The best people believed, as they were intended to do, in the genuine goodness of such an act.

The wretched Botherby was never completely sober again during the brief remnant of his artistic career. He drank the vile rum of the country in so frantic a manner that he died, and was buried by his artistic associates, just as the eloquence of Stingray had prevailed on the admiral to settle three hundred pounds a-year on him, paid quarterly; and about a month after the stern but honourable veteran had repaid, not without emotion, the forty pounds which his son's cynical benefactor had so queerly invested. The letter containing the advice to Torlonia, with a few words from his father, severe but touching enough, had the old man's agony been revealed by those stiff characters penned with a trembling hand—that letter lay unopened by the dying artist's pallet, as his rakish associates took their last look of him. Long after that drunken scapegrace lay mouldering in his grave was Stingray the honoured guest of a melancholy old man, who always wrung his hand with vehemence at parting, though he said nothing; and when that old man died he left Stingray a thousand

pounds, a presentation sword, his naval orders in diamonds, a gold snuff-box, a portrait of himself in uniform, and a portfolio of faded and execrable designs and sketches done by the son whom he had once repudiated, which were suspiciously blistered by something that looked as if they had been some time or other in the vicinity of the Icelandic geysers, and consequently sprinkled with drops of scalding water like tears.

Shall we here narrate the elaborate ruse by which Stingray got admission to the exclusive Whig literary circle of Amsterdam House? Shall we tell of a trick which he played a brother author which would have caused the double-faced Janus himself to blush at such paltry perfidy? We think we have not space here.

Stingray had known Arthur Aubrey very slightly, some four or five years before—in fact, at Rome. Soon after Aubrey was married, he met our philosopher on his cob in Rotten Row. The latter grasped Arthur's hand with emotion, and said:

“I congratulate you, dear boy—pardon me, permit me—but such a case as yours—I know all—evokes our better sympathies—touches chords”—his bridle was here squeezed on the left pocket of the vast white waistcoat of the man—“I heard of it all—I said such an attachment, such a match, is an honour to human nature. I congratulate you both. May I call and be introduced to your beautiful bride?”

CHAPTER VI.

THE RATTLE OF A FASHIONABLE DRUM.

The hold which a man has on the "world," as he is in the habit of terming that very minute portion of it, the "society" immediately surrounding himself, through the instrumentality of banquets and other magnificent entertainments called "parties," may be likened to a chain of any size or strength, from one appertaining to an Italian greyhound's collar to the cable of a three-decker, or of the *Great Eastern* herself. There is a series of links connecting the Amphytrion in the most delightful manner with human sympathy, gratitude, and regard. But no matter how thick and long that chain may be, let only the last and latest link, which joins it to the present moment, be wanted, and all is gone in an instant—vanished, as if it had slipped into an unfathomable depth. Every former link, nay, the whole chain from end to end, slides into the ocean of Oblivion, and is for ever lost to sight. —*From the Note-book of Solomon Trustall. Chapter last.*

LET us now transport our readers to a reception at Aubrey's house. The rooms are not large, but everything is in excellent taste, especially for a parvenu, as the guests themselves admit.

We will imagine the rooms crammed, and that Blanche Aubrey has just sung one of her most exquisite Italian songs, accompanying herself on the harp.

"Ah, madame," said a portly Italian, who had crept into an excellent berth by worrying a Libera Lord Chancellor, as no Englishman could do, until it became absolutely necessary to give him something in

order to get rid of him—"ah, madame, why are you so rich? It is a cruelty, a theft, a crime, I swear it, I—why are you not of the opera, I say it? What voice! What pronunciation the most gracious! In our Italy you should be easily prima donna, first of the first. Oh!" and he kissed his fat dusky fingers with a species of ecstasy. "Sentite! in my country, the young men should draw your carriage, instead of horses."

"A donkey carriage!" growled Stingray apart.

"Thank you," said Blanche to the signor, "I prefer my ponies even to so flattering a mark of distinction. Do you know, Mr. Stingray," she added, "I had a thoroughly English compliment paid me the other day. A great City merchant said to me, after listening very attentively to a song which I had attempted, 'My dear madam, if you were only on the stage, you would make three thousand pounds a year.' Can you imagine a Frenchman or Italian saying that?"

"They would as soon think of speculating upon the salary of a seraph," replied the signor.

"Or considering," quoth Lord Madeiraville, "the exact amount that Mr. Lumley would give for the services of a real Peri for the ballet at Her Majesty's Theatre."

"Yes," observed Stingray, "they are so disinterested, so unpractical, your countrymen, signor; when they ally themselves to a daughter of Albion, they look only at her worth."

"For instance," drawled Sir Harry Luckless, "there is Miss Debrett Stumpey has had forty-nine

offers from foreign counts, one for each year of her age, I fancy, and they all declared it was for herself alone they sought her, which must be considered satisfactory proof."

"At any rate," observed Arthur, "the compliments of foreigners are more felicitous than ours."

"My countrymen have great admiration for de Inglees ladies," was all that the signor deigned to say in answer to these remarks.

"I'll tell you what," said Stingray, "the English are the most polite people in the world. Look at a French table d'hôte! Who ever saw an Englishman help himself to the best parts of a chicken, and then push the dish containing the drum-sticks violently over to a lady sitting opposite to him? An Englishman will take off his great-coat in a shower of rain to protect a lady from the wet. We have all the practical and most valuable elements of politeness. What foreigner would have acted as Raleigh did to Queen Elizabeth? A new velvet cloak was something in those days. A French knight would have paid a compliment to her feet, as he handed her through the puddle, with one hand on his heart and a look of languishing adoration. You know the story, do you not, signor?"

"But, yes, I know."

"What would one of your countrymen have done?"

"Diverted the royal attention from the puddle by some sublime nonsense on the stars, which he would have doubtless likened to her eyes, while leading her into it," was the suggestion of Luckless.

“ Good !” said the signor.

“ Contrived to lead her round the obstruction with the utmost gallantry,” continued Lord Madeiraville.

“ Bah !” said the signor.

“ Snatched a page’s cloak and flung it down instead of his own ?” observed another of the circle.

“ But how ?” said the signor. “ Ecco ! signorine e signori. I will tell you, in the first place, a poor Italian like your most humble servitor would have had a cloak of velours in cotton unworthy of the sacrifice. I would have taken your royal mistress in my arms, and carried her over, after which I would have knelt in a clean place, and prayed to have my head cut off in punishment of a presumption so tremendous.”

Great laughter followed the signor’s declaration.

“ I wish to Heaven !” said Stingray, “ that you had lived at that period to make so charming an alteration in the page of history. No doubt, signor, but my Lord Burleigh would have received the royal mandate to make you at least Court librarian.”

“ Egad !” said Sir Harry, “ I believe that the signor would have married our immortal Queen Bess, and they would have reigned ever after in Tilbury Fort, with the store-houses crammed with maccaroni, and the cellars full of orvietò and vino d’asti, and surrounded by articles of virtù in mosaic and bronze.”

“ It would have changed our whole style of architecture,” lisped a young disciple of Vitruvius.

“ We should have had opera a century earlier,” said Lord Madeiraville.

“Listen,” said the signor, whose good humour was as imperturbable as his resentments were fierce and enduring; “it might not have been worse for your poor Albion, had I been the consort of your great Elisabet. In the first place, I would have made it one great crime to teach any charming blonde English miss to sing and make music, who has not the voice and the taste to learn ever to please us. Ah! what false compliments we should be spared! What torments we should lose! In my country no one is forced to learn to sing and play, when the Nature says not. In the painting, it is different. The bad pictures hide themselves. At least one is not forced to look or to admire. But it is terrible what one must endure in the English society with the bad singers, who have paid hundreds of pounds to excruciate their hearers. Ah! signor” (to Stingray), “I was sorry for you last evening. It was at the great Mr. Goldborough’s, where you were forced so politely to compliment the daughters of the house. The one sang loud as a cornet-à-piston, with no ear at all for music; and the other had some ear for the music, with no voice. Signor Stingray has asked continually for one more little song, and I do believe he should have turned over the leaves, only for a young Tedesco, who anticipated him.”

“Hem!” growled Stingray, “a man must not be a complete savage, you know.”

“Besides, Goldborough gives about the best dinners in London,” said Sir Harry. “His chef is superb.”

“I see,” said the Italian, in his own language;

“ then it was the stomach of my friend that praised the singing so ardently.” Foreigners have this advantage in English society, they can say so much that is not admissible in the native tongue.

“ It was your conscience, signor, and your ears that I pitied,” he continued ; “ but I see now I need not have so done.”

Mr. Stingray smiled grimly and superciliously. He was considering his revenge.

“ In my country,” said the signor, “ one hears a fine voice somewhere, anywhere, in the streets. One is struck with the melody, the natural grace and power of the singer. The gem is picked up and polished. We do not care to teach even the daughter of a Borghese, or of a wealthy Prince Polonia to sing, if she have not the gift of Nature. Here the child of a banker must have masters to cultivate her most marked imperfections at any price. And what is the result ? My dear friend Stingray dines with the papa, and, in complimenting mademoiselle, praises a different artist.”

“ My dear signor,” said Stingray, “ pray spare me. I am no judge of music, in which your countrymen excel. Who can wonder that a people deprived of liberty should cultivate melody in their bondage ? I protest that I am no flatterer. There is one thing, signor, which I hope you would have done for us, had you fortunately lived a contemporary of Leicester and Burleigh, and married our virgin queen, an idea which delights me much. I hope you would have sent back all the Italian organ-grinders to their own country, and hanged their detestable padroni without

the slightest compunction. Under those circumstances I would willingly have pledged you my allegiance."

"I would have forced you to supply them with better organs, my friend," replied the Italian with dignified composure. "What! it is you who cause and encourage the evil, and then you complain. As the signor minister here would say" (turning to a gentleman with a very unpleasant expression of face, who had just entered) "where there is no market, the supply will cease. Is it not?"

The personage just appealed to shrugged his shoulders, and replied that he was hardly prepared to admit more than a moiety of the proposition to be correct. If a thing were continuously forced upon the market when there was no demand, it was quite possible that a demand might be created. He then, amid breathless silence and admiration, uttered two or three sentences of such astounding length, that it became a marvel how he could possibly light on his legs, as he did, with all the finished grace of an acrobat, at the end. Certainly there was little or nothing conveyed in these rhetorical flourishes, not an idea, nor even an expression worthy of being remembered or recorded; no golden apothegm, or felicitous thought. But the style was perfect, and the language correct and scholastic; every word fell into its place as if by a conjurer's art. He was not a magician, much less an inspired prophet or lawgiver. His was truly the eloquence of national decline. He was the spokesman of expediency and compromise; the orator of mediocrity, and the specious abandonment of all

that by which England achieved greatness, and which our forefathers held dear. As a nation cannot be made without virtues, so it cannot be ruined without cleverness. There is the skill to make, and the skill to mar. There are the arts that build, and the arts that usher to destruction. It requires a sage to found, a sophist to destroy. Knowledge supplies the place of wisdom; and shallow learning, the deep and philosophic instincts of greatness. In the Right Honourable Felix Sowerface were combined, with curious infelicity, the policy of elegant concession to England's enemies and of sardonic antagonism to her friends. He was the polished advocate of internal corruption, and of external enmity, peril, and disgrace. His state-craft was exactly the reverse of that of a Cromwell or a Pitt. His face was not handsome, nor intellectual in the highest sense, not even up to the mark of the ability which his bitterest denouncers could not but acknowledge. His conduct suggested the idea of a Jesuit without religion, of a Machiavelli without a prince. Such men are born in the dotage and decay of empire, to shine with a false light, to lead astray from principle and virtue with the tawdry glitter of false sentiment, hollow sophistry, and fluent pretence.

In the decline and fall of a nation, are there not appropriate ministers born naturally to the occasion, as heroes and statesmen are born to rough-hew and cement her greatness? As the epochs in the history of an empire, so are the men. And one thing is certain as it is remarkable, viz., that the false politicians, the false poets, philosophers, and orators

infinitely exceed in their transient glory and fame the contemporaneous meed awarded to the real children of genius and the true representatives of patriotism and grandeur of soul. What honest man, what example of real worth and sagacity, was ever lauded like the Right Honourable Felix Sowerface in his day? Why, even Nelson before his death was scarcely fêted like some of our late pseudo-heroes and incapables during the Russian war. In the present age, laudation has been so vulgarised in its excessive and false application, that we have lately become apprehensive that when the next extraordinary humbug shall die, there will be no praise left! Equestrian statues have lost their dignity; even burials in Westminster Abbey are threatened with loss of distinction. When lately one of the worst incarnations of the modern spirit of the age became defunct, whose godless theories and practice, were they carried out, would reverse, in the persons of Englishmen, the theory of Lord Monboddo, and rapidly reduce the stunted operative to the condition of the ape, such spasmodic threnodies were raised by a sort of newspaper chorus, that we felt inclined to exclaim: "There *can* be nothing next!" When a good and most virtuously domestic prince was lately taken from amongst us, the laudation was so injuriously fulsome, that a living tyrant of old Rome could hardly have exacted more. In China, such things are, doubtless, estimated at their proper worth. When the "Celestial Light of the Universe" disappears, we know that an emperor is dead, and that another "Light" is ready to be set up. But in England we are not yet all

quite accustomed to this verbal ecstasy, which marks both the softening of the brain and the corruption of the heart of a community. The Right Honourable Felix Sowerface was an adept in laying on the adulatory gold-leaf on the national idol for the nonce. It was wonderful to hear him keeping up this rhetorical game of shuttlecock with the leader of the Opposition in the House. You knew that neither meant an iota of what he said. And yet by this sort of art each held his place in public estimation, and their spasmodic admirers cried, "What a capital speech!" even if they had not read a line of it in the "Times," and only heard of it in the skimble-skamble conversation in a railway first-class carriage. Nothing save the most abject confessions of the Litany can express the state of all concerned in this millennium of "sham." Such was the right honourable gentleman who had just entered the Aubreys' salons, the observed of all observers, the most honoured, because the most *recherché* guest of the night. True, neither host nor hostess exactly liked the man; but they were no politicians, and had neither probed nor sought to probe the great social bubbles of the day. The Right Honourable Felix contrived somehow or other to mix up the great Italian question with the organ-boys and their monkeys. He spoke of foreign dungeons, as if England had neither workhouses nor prisons. He had much to say about the liberties of the Sicilian and Florentine people; but he questioned the liberties of the poorer classes in England to drink beer after a certain hour, or to indulge in a little street music and song.

It was difficult to connect all, or anything that he said, but it was somehow blended into a harmonious utterance of verbiage that to many seemed irresistible in its logical force and grace; and whilst he spoke his sardonic countenance was distorted with a smile, which Mephistopheles might have envied, but which was generally pronounced intellectual in the highest and most refined degree by those whose opinions bore weight. The sun alone refused to flatter or disguise the man. His photographs would certainly not have favourably impressed any one, not recognising in them their distinguished and well-known original. The Right Honourable Felix finished by saying that the upper and middle classes were alike concerned, as a matter of taste and public convenience, to put down that which without doubt exercised a most disturbing influence on the elegant culture of the age. "The fine ears of the ancient Greeks," he said, "in the period of their widest and broadest freedom, would not have endured the cacophony of these peripatetic pests whose miseries imported them, in pursuit of the charitable obolus, from some petty and distant state."

Here Arthur broke in. "In my humble opinion, it is a great cruelty to put down that which affords so great an amusement to the poor. I have seen what perhaps no one here has witnessed, the delight of a troop of children in a court or alley, in some populous and wretched part of this great town, dancing to the music of the poor organ-man, who looks smilingly on the ragged little beings circling around him. It is not those who really have music

in their souls who create all this fuss about street music. It is your stock-fish, your vegetable calculators, your Professor Cabbages, and your selfish, thrice selfish epicureans and kakistocrats, your pharisaical impostors, who drink wine at their clubs and mansions, but would deprive the labourer or mechanic of a draught of beer in a comfortable bar, who grudge the slender amusements of the poor."

Blanche looked at her husband approvingly as he paused.

"Is it possible, Mr. Aubrey, that you can seriously defend these dreadful creatures? I thought you were a real lover of music," observed Lady Madeiraville.

"So I hope I am," replied Arthur; "but I hope also that I am attuned to a higher harmony—that of the heart." Emboldened afresh by the expressive eyes of Blanche, he continued, turning towards the Italian—"Your great Rossini, signor, did not despise street players, when he said that it was the most flattering sign of his success to hear one of his airs ground on a barrel-organ. I repeat that it is a most touching sight to see, as I have, a crowd of children on a Christmas Eve dancing round one of these good-humoured fellows in an otherwise dismal or dreary court, or on a summer night in the suburbs, while their parents stand in their squalid door-ways gazing pleased and approvingly on the small, humble delights of their ragged offspring. Who would not endure some inconvenience to afford this harmless recreation to thousands of poor children, who have so little to embellish or amuse their childish life? I do not wish to talk politics," he continued, "but I cannot help

thinking that our selfish over-legislation in this and other respects is storing the waters of hatred and bitterness, which may some day burst their embankment, and spread ruin around. Your oligarchy, nay, your legislative assembly, such as it is, which a party oligarch holds in the hollow of his hand with the division list of the House, as he comes down to make his conventional speeches, this oligarchy, I repeat, dares to do more to annoy, irritate, and disgust the people, than any despotic ruler in the world. Parliament and the police interfere with the petty liberties of the poor in the most paltry and illiberal manner. The small fruit or fish vendor who comes to the poor man's door must of necessity charge a percentage as a recompense for constant liability to imprisonment and black-mail. Whilst your clubs and private mansions afford every indulgence to the rich in their week-day and Sabbath potations, the tired mechanic is exposed to the devices and machinations of a pharisaical Sir Andrew Aguecheek, eager to balk his thirst and to baffle all his requirements. The police are encouraged to treat the lower classes with more insolence and brutalising brutality than would be used by an army of occupation in a foreign country. And lastly, forgetting what a short radius your refined musical circle can boast, and that although there is a "Beggar's Opera," there is no opera for a beggar, or even a working man, or small shopkeeper, or the majority of the middle classes, Legislation, with a refinement of selfishness, led by a trader giving himself more ridiculous airs of taste and sensitiveness, forsooth! than were ever murdered on all the

barrel-organs and hurdy-gurdies in creation, stoops to interfere with the enjoyment of millions to gratify the affectation and frigid cruelty of a few pretenders to fine taste."

"Bravo! Bravissimo, Signor Arturo!" rolled forth the deep voice of the Italian. "Then you at least would not banish my poor countrymen. What says the signora?"

"Nay," said Blanche, timidly, "I think always with my husband. We neither of us like the German brass-bands, chiefly of youths and boys, who, unlike their countrymen generally, are in the habit of playing such frightful discords at all hours. But they appear, for certain reasons, to be less persecuted than the organ-players."

"You are eloquent, Mr. Aubrey," said Stingray, sarcastically. "We shall see you in Parliament soon, and then you can advocate the cause of your friends. But I fear you will only expose yourself to ridicule in these days."

"Ah!" said Blanche, "that ridicule! How it numbs and destroys earnestness! I wish we were more earnest in these days; but it seems to me as if all were acting in the present age, and too often acting only burlesque into the bargain."

"I'll tell you what, Mrs. Aubrey," quoth the good-natured Lord Madeiraville, "there's a good deal in what your husband says, and I own it never struck me before. If ever I am called upon to consider the matter in a public point of view, I must confess that I shall think over its various bearings very carefully." And his lordship adjusted his legislative neck-tie, and

looked towards Blanche for an approving smile. Unfortunately for his hopes, her smiles of approval were reserved entirely for her husband.

"Come!" cried the signor, "at least, dearest lady, there is no danger to the conscience of our dear friend Stingray, if he should applaud *you*. Give us, I pray you, madame, a melody of Schubert. It will be apropos of our mention of the brave Tedeschi. For my part, I am of no country. I love all good music and musicians. Or an air of Halévy, or better still that charming French *chansonnette* of the young Breton. Come! I will turn over the leaves; Mr. Stingray cannot do it very well, I know. He will banish my poor countrymen for making the discord, because he does not like any music. Come, madame!" and he began humming, "*La mer m'attend, je vais partir demain!*"

Blanche sang it with touching tenderness, and when she had finished, the signor heaved a sigh like a hot puff from Vesuvius, and Sir Harry Luckless felt a moisture in his eyes, which annoyed him greatly. Sir Harry was not heartless; but how is it that a bit of pathetic acting on the stage will sometimes cause the most unfeeling persons in real life to cry like children? We do not think that Nero would have wept over the "Sorrows of Werter;" but we fully believe he might have sobbed heartily, had he witnessed the late Mr. Farren's delineation of Grandfather Whitehead at the Haymarket Theatre. Speaking of that theatre, we remember once to have gone with a celebrated Yankee inventor to see Miss Cushman play Meg Merrilies. That very morning our

Transatlantic acquaintance had witnessed the mutilation of a girl's arm by the machinery of his works, and had treated the affair with the utmost indifference, looking upon it as so much material used up, and calculating the least possible amount he might have to pay for it. That evening he fairly wept at the mimic touches of passion and sentiment which were certainly wonderfully rendered by the great actress. Again, we have known ladies with the softest and tenderest hearts in real life almost incapable of being moved either by a novel or a play.

One of the few persons utterly untouched and undelighted was the Right Honourable Felix Sowerface. We need scarcely say that he felt bitterly offended by Arthur Aubrey's daring speech. With an "agrodolce" smile of the most fascinating bitterness, he took an early opportunity to bid his hostess adieu. As he returned homewards, he was probably occupied in scheming how to bribe the Irish tail in the House of Commons, without alienating the Scotch members from his faction. It was a task that might have puzzled a Mazarin, a Richelieu, or a Loyola. The two former, however, intrigued for the State, as well as for themselves; the last for a Society and a Creed. Mr. Sowerface had no object, save to keep in office, and indulge in his hours of leisure in the accumulation of *rococo* monstrosities and a taste for the display of useless and pedantic learning. He was, indeed,

Not versed in elements of saving policy,
But deeply skilled in all the arts
That usher to destruction.

And this, England will some day find out, with

regard to a modern breed of statesmen, of whom Mr. Sowerface may be taken, not only as a specimen, but as a type.

It was the worst period of the Crimean war, and the conversation naturally turned to the horrible and heart-rending sufferings of our army, which were then being made known by the newspapers to an indignant public. A young and talented barrister, Mr. Ernest Delolme, spoke with cutting severity on what he termed "The Tragedy of Errors," at that time being acted in the Crimea. He gave a rapid sketch of the blunders, and the inconsistencies, save in ruin and mischief, not to say the treasons, of the authorities up to that time. In using the word "treason," he said he did not mean it in the old State sense. He meant treason to our soldiers and sailors, or treason to our allies. "Look," he observed, "how the Turks are sacrificed. They were actually beating Russia at every point, when the allies intervened, just in time to save Russia from the disgrace of her reverses on the Danube." The Turkish fleet, he said, was in fighting trim, when British orders from Constantinople occasioned the massacre of Sinope. The Turks were fully aware of the danger of their light squadron, and were about to order the main body of their fleet into the Black Sea, when the interference of the English ambassador at Constantinople prevented their coming to the rescue. Then the Russians, after that terrible massacre, were allowed under the silent British guns to remove all their stores, arms, and garrisons from the Eastern Coast to Sebastopol, against which we hurled our armies and fleets; when we had given

them sufficient time for preparation. A fatally unhealthy station for the British troops was fixed on, in the teeth of warning, with an obstinate deliberation, which looked like an evil purpose, even if it were only the result of inconceivable folly and self-blinded ignorance. We refused the aid of the Circassians and of the Poles. The latter he could understand as being in accordance with the traditional iniquity of our Foreign Office, which saw Poland partitioned and repartitioned, and thereby became a chronic accessory to that terrible crime against humanity. But the former he could not understand, if treason to England herself were alien to our councils. What price should we not hereafter pay for that unheard-of proceeding!* As for the clothing and victualling blunders, these were the mere details of imbecility, compared with the criminal shortcomings and deliberate sacrifices of our fearful impolicy in the East. Why give Russia time to make things snug at Sebastopol? Why strike upon her shield at all? Why spare Odessa, especially after the affair of the *Tiger*? We were actually directing the war, if it were a war, against the lives of our own gallant tars and soldiers. How singularly fatuitous was the appointment of our generals!

In this strain he ran on, and such was the feeling at the moment, that no one seemed disposed to challenge or contradict him. Alas! how much more was there to condemn, before the end; and who could have dreamt that the whole affair would

* This was written some five years ago, and is given as it was written.

have been condoned by an apathetic nation, with the connivance of the chief impeachers, and with the assistance of those who were the first to denounce that monstrous misconduct which threatened to blot out a thousand years of England's glory with two short years of official incapacity and shame? What has become of the "credulity and connivance" accusations of the enraged tribunes of the people, seeking with burning words to arouse England to a sense of the mighty sacrifice and crime? The history of that war and its period has not yet been written; although *petit-maître* cleverness, specious verbosity, well-simulated earnestness, and partial spite have combined to write and print volumes of clever twaddle, anecdotes, fact and fiction, declamation and exaggeration, and call it a true record of that stupendous "sell." Alas! the very smartness and acerbity occasionally indulged in only conceal the fact that such works are really penned in the apologetic interest of official misdeeds. What might not be written, if the truth were written? What was it that paralysed the right arm of England in attitude to strike? What secret orders muzzled the bull-dogs of our fleets? What saved, as it had spared, Russia at England's expense? What was the tale of Kars, over which the heroic General Kméty mournfully smiled to the end of his days? What priggish narrative of a smooth "speciosity" might unveil the curious darkness of those deeds? And, lastly, what has all this to do with our narrative, and the fortunes of our heroine? Not much, it must be confessed; but still it is some-

times allowed to novelists, good, bad, and indifferent, especially to the narrators of true histories, to indulge their discursive faculties.

Mr. Ernest Delolme was soon voted a bore, as he deserved to be, for indulging in such political rhodomontade at such a time and place, or any time and place. Long before he had finished, he had only got one hearer, a very shy young gentleman, who was very glad to be talked to by anybody, and who said "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "Bless me, do you think so?" and "Really, is it possible?" in the most praiseworthy manner. Even he was glad when his tormentor was compelled to leave off during an exquisite performance on the piano, which resembled hundreds of mice running up and down enchanted glass stairs, accompanied by dreadful groanings and rumblings in an underground kitchen, and the occasional crash of plates. The enthusiastic barrister was just demonstrating the truth of some absurd charge of connivance between the British and Russian Governments in relation to hides, horns, tallows, and a South American tariff, and the proclamation of our blockade of the Northern Ports on the wrong day according to the Russian calendar. But by the time the fantasia on the piano was ended his sole hearer had escaped, and every one was talking about his or her hobby, or whatever they could find to talk about, including the Aztecs, the Opera, the Empress of the French, the prospects of the grouse season, the Divorce Court, the new and extremely improper novel by a female writer, the latest City failure, and the last vicious, spiteful morsel of scandal about

every one's dear friend. It was dreadful to hear what awful aspersions were smilingly uttered, what stabs were given by the finished Gladiators and Amazons of Society; with what relish these moral cannibals devoured the reputations of the absent with the sharpest appetite and sauce. In this business the most blasé and languid of the company excelled the rest.

"Yaas, lots of birds—Going to Scotland?—Not this ye-are, no—Husband knew it all the time—Hasn't twenty pounds left in the world—Serve him right, regular baw—How delightful—Every girl in the school—Heard it from little Rogers—Page-boy absconded—Nonsense—Fact, 'pon honour!—Found letter in prayer-book—Will have thirty thousand—Better look out, old fellow—Got glass eye—Ha, ha! diamond one you mean—Kept by Chalkstoneville—Lived with Lascelles of the Guards—Town getting empty—Switzerland to-morrow—They say he once robbed his employer—Clever fellow—Lord Chancellor some day—So her groom told Wigsby—The old woman wouldn't stand it—Put the screw on and brought him back—Married German courier at Baden—Called himself a Prince—Yes, Baron Levy, and Captain St. James—Every one knows it—Husband too—Gets three hundred pounds a-year from both—Capital joke! ha, ha! Yankee ambassador—Would have known he was your lordship's son—Turfed him at last—Off to Sweden—They say he poisoned her—Takes the chair at Exeter Hall to-night—Debauched old wretch—Think so, indeed?—Heard about Biggleswade?—Dreadful story—Rather amusing—Safe majority—Irish members—Concession to Rome

—The O'Tool a judge—Paddy Grady in the Admiralty
 —Lots of new appointments—Left her six children
 —Old enough to be her father—Grey hairs—Never
 safe—Bombarded all the villages—Insult to mis-
 sionary—Very proper proceeding—Says he broke his
 nose at school—Don't believe it—Charming creechure
 —Going to marry vulgar swell—Regent-street shawl-
 shop—Thrashed him well—No, he didn't—Can't say
 which got the worst of it—Served them both right—
 City editor—A hundred shares—Wrote 'em up—
 Sold out—Never had a share in his life—Tell that to
 the marines—Paints an inch thick—Natural daughter
 of old Sir Peter—Married two brothers—Tin and
 title—Not so bad—Annexation of Futteypoor—House
 counted out—Knew her when she was in Dublin—
 Common as———A Russian prince—Refused him—
 Marry an English duke—Couldn't write her name—
 Comme elle est charmante—No one knows who she
 was—Son of a merchant—Do give us one more song
 —An English ballad—Good fellow—Great ass—
 Gives himself airs—Horrible crowd," &c. &c.

The above is an attempt to transcribe the Babel of Aubrey's rooms on the occasion of a musical entertainment, or "thé chantant," or whatever it might please any one to call it. To say that the host and hostess did not come in for their fair share of unpleasant criticism and rampant abuse, would be to disguise a painful truth. They did. Not even the sweet, unaffected Blanche escaped. As for her husband, *Que diable allait il faire?* He deserved all he got. He was a kind of unconscious "snob" to give those parties; and to allow himself to be trans-

ported thus out of his proper sphere, which was not the high circle of fashion in which he moved, or which moved about him. He was spending far too much money, and what return was he likely to get for the investment?

It would be absurd to pretend that Blanche did not instinctively comprehend the attentions paid to her by her husband's distinguished friends. She did not appreciate all their coarse aspirations hidden under the fulsome flatteries and vapid compliments which the vanity of women too often esteems far more than dignified politeness, and the timid courtesies of true manhood. Her knowledge of the wickedness of the world, and the heartless libertinism of fashionable society was, indeed, but small. Her pure nature interpreted aright an audacious look or impertinent though veiled remark, without reflection or analysis. Gifted as she was with great firmness, still her spirit shrank like the sensitive plant, ere the contact of evil, at its near approach. When the good-natured but dissipated Madeiraville was a trifle too ardent in his sympathies, her large eyes dilated with a species of inquiring wonder which caused his stare of admiration to fade into the most ordinary glance, expressive of commonplace salutation or remark. She moved among the *roués*, old and young, intellectual or stupid, who crowded the salons of her small but exquisite dwelling, like an unsophisticated lady in Comus, untouched by charm or spell. She needed no brothers to rescue her from the enchanter or his impure throng; simply because her innocence and her artistic genius combined with repellent force

to keep all harm away, and purify each moral taint in the heated atmosphere floating around her. She did not care for the praises, the homage, the adoration lavished upon her. She was enshrined in domestic love, and deaf and blind to all outside her own blameless thoughts. Like a star she moved in her own sphere, and as a star she shone high above all debasing influences: the bad-hearted of her own sex hated her; but, in most cases, she did not see or feel their hate. The fact was, ay, and the poetry of it, too, that she was happy. Felicity is apt to be unconscious of envy, and slow to apprehend wickedness. Still Blanche had her likes and dislikes, and there were many whom she would have banished from her society, only that she did not like to dictate to, or disturb Arthur, in his choice of associates. On his part, silly fellow, he was proud of his wife's beauty and accomplishments, and proud of the *éclat* of the society which he kept. He did not perceive that he moved in a sphere above his own rank, according to the social scale, solely on account of the fascinations of his charming wife. He did not consider that to her beauty, her magnificent voice and musical genius and culture, her grace and daring as a horsewoman, and her varied and splendid accomplishments, he owed his own toleration by dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, who would otherwise never have deigned to acknowledge his existence. It is quite true that he was a gentlemanly and scholar-like man, with the reputation of being well off, and that he was distantly related to one noble family of some provincial weight; but there are hundreds of young

fellows, who have greater advantages than his, who do not congregate at their houses the *élite* of the beau-monde, with cabinet ministers, distinguished writers, and artists, and occasionally even royalty itself. For a certain royal highness, accompanied, or rather led, by a certain military poodle with beautifully combed locks, which no hairdresser's window could surpass, had been there, and had been heard to affirm with martial emphasis that the little Aubrey was a dashed fine creature, by dash! Now, it is clear that Mr. Aubrey, so far as all this went, although a very independent, fine fellow, and possessing the entire and devoted affections of her who thus ennobled him, was only the husband of his wife. Did he love her with equal devotion? We shall see.

It is certain that when a man is really in love and truly infatuated, his love becomes a representative of the firmer, stronger, and more consistent character of his sex. Such cases are rare, it may be; but as the works of man are as a rule greater, weightier, and more durable than those of woman, so is his faith more lasting, and his folly or frenzy more persistent. As a rule, men are not capable of purer attachments and deeper devotion than women; but the rarer examples are greater and more elevated in the male sex. Love in man, when blended with passion, must always touch the imagination as well as sway the senses. The highest love is, of course, refined by the domestic affections, and elevated by respect. But there are two things that, in ordinary men and cases, have a great deal to do with both the fervour and constancy of attachment. One is the fear of

losing the affections of the beloved object, and the other the undisguised admiration of Society. Vanity and jealousy, or jealous fear, are thus undoubted safeguards of love. There is an early love of the "John Anderson" description, and a poetic love, which are beyond the necessity or influence of these unworthy auxiliaries. But how many men are there who delight in exhibiting the fine creature whom they own, not exactly *à la* Gyges and Candaules, but animated by similar feelings to those of the ill-fated monarch who paid the penalty of his indiscretion? And, again, how dangerous a guest of love is security! How rarely can a woman afford to let a man know that she is wholly devoted to him, if she be so! If possession itself be perilous, how much more so must be absolute confidence in a woman and unrivalled dominion over her heart? There are some to whom this certainty would be the fondest tie, the last and strongest bond of union; but they are few indeed. Arthur Aubrey knew that Blanche was utterly and entirely his own; he knew that her exquisite and delicate nature would never suffer her, under any circumstances, to love again. At the same time he was proud of her. She appealed to his imagination, and he had, at least, plenty of distinguished rivals in the field, if the titled and moneyed profligates who shook him by the hand and held him by the button, and partook of his hospitality and proffered to him their own, could, for one instant, be allowed to call themselves by so fair a name.

Of all the men who visited the Aubreys, the one whom Blanche disliked most, apart from those whose marked attention awakened instinctive aversion, was

Mr. Stingray, author and wit. It is not difficult to understand this. Many persons of much greater knowledge of the world and experience of life devoutly believed in Stingray's worth and candour. They saw in his morbid fierceness of attack merely the indignant denunciation of vice and folly. They did not perceive in him the baseness and meanness which constantly served his own selfish and egotistic ends. He had early discovered the cowardice of Society, and he treated it accordingly. He aimed at being feared, and succeeded. The fact was, that he hated all good and noble natures, and unceasingly lampooned all that was earnest and single-minded among mankind, either of the present age or the past. The greatest denouncer of tuft-hunting and toadyism, he would lay such plans to be invited to the table of any eminent personage, that they would have done credit, as I have before narrated, for obstinacy and perseverance, to the French *petit Hercule*, M. Pertuiset, who is said to have lain in wait in an African forest six hundred nights to bag his twenty-sixth lion. While painting with the finish of a Dutch master, and varnishing with vitrol, if one may imagine such a process, his admirable pictures of the petty arts and contemptible aims of Brown, Jones, or Robinson, to elevate themselves in the social scale, Mr. Stingray out-heroded the beings whom he thus exhibited, by exercising far more disgusting artifices, and practising still more disreputable tricks in the constant prosecution of his own self-advancement. Nay, he was more vulgar than the worst educated and lowest of the individuals whose eccentricities it

was his pleasure and his forte to denounce. He would call one man a "snob" for hiring a couple of extra footmen on the occasion of giving a dinner-party, and another for boasting of his acquaintance with a lord, and a third for talking loudly at his club; whilst he himself would talk in an elevated tone of dining with Palmerston yesterday, or running over to see Devonshire at Chatsworth. Some of this had forced itself on the notice of Blanche; but it was the unkindly spirit of the man that chiefly offended her feelings and wounded her sympathies. It was his custom invariably to deride and ridicule the Irish people; that is, when he dared do so, either in speech or writing. Was there anything in the generous and impulsive character of the Celt that was highly antagonistic to his nature, or had he ever, as one might fairly surmise, been kicked by an Irishman? Blanche could not forget that her mother was the daughter of an impoverished Irish house; and, perhaps, this intensified the strong dislike which she unquestionably entertained for Mr. Stingray. He worshipped success, she revered virtue even in difficulties. He sneered at the errors of the head, she was a warm advocate of the heart's generous promptings. Thus, though she did not and could not entertain a notion of the intense bitterness of mind which actuated this terrible censor of Society, yet she felt and knew enough to dislike him exceedingly. He had forced his passage to the front rank like a huge chimney-sweep, blackening all he touched, and yet every one sought to secure him for their parties and *réunions*, partly for conciliation's sake, and partly because he was the fashion in high circles.

In this way he added to the celebrity of Arthur Aubrey's distinguished little circle. Blanche endured him, simply because to have objected to him would have been held as something perfectly monstrous; and on one or two occasions, when she would have omitted his name from a list of invited guests, Aubrey had appeared mortified, and surprised at her forgetfulness. To her he was a sort of moral upas, shadowing and blighting for a time all her enjoyment, her very trustfulness in her own happiness and domestic bliss. She could not even sing so well when he was present. The advent of some men will exercise a chilling influence on the merriest group. Innocent pastime becomes at once ridiculous when they are nigh. Everything puts on a different aspect, as if a cloud had suddenly obscured a smiling landscape. They bring with them heartache, headache, cynicism, and discontent. Such a man was Sting-ray. He professed to be very fond of little children; but they ceased to play in his presence, and could not be won even by his presents to respond to his caresses. "Ah! my little man," he would say, with a grin meant to look benignant, "we shall know each other better by-and-bye." In endeavouring to ingratiate himself with small folks, he would always insidiously appeal to their bad passions or instincts. If it were a girl, he would encourage or draw out the spirit of coquetry or curiosity, if he could. If a boy, he would tempt his pugnacity or greed. And all this he would do in so natural and pleasant a manner, that it required a moral detective to discover his meaning and intent.

CHAPTER VII.

THANK HEAVEN! THEY ARE ALL GONE.

They are gone, all the vain and cold-hearted,
The jewelled, the feathered, and dyed;
Now the last smiling wretch has departed,
Come, hither, love! sit by my side.

Tell me, are we the happier for all, love!
This expense, this annoyance, and fuss;
Of the swell mob that came to our ball, love!
Was there one cared a rushlight for us?

We were blamed for profusion, pretension,
We were mocked for our shabby set-out,
Still you'll own, love! 'twas great condescension,
In such grand folks to come to our rout.

But between you and me and the "Post," love!
The bedpost, not journal, I mean;
(I declare you're as white as a ghost, love!
In a week grown quite careworn and lean).

We will show ourselves, henceforth, much wiser,
Than to pinch for such thankless display,
See those wax lights—Quick! ring for Eliza—
Burning still, as I live, in broad day.

SOME time or other, it might be one or two o'clock A.M., after the night when the conversation of which we have attempted to give some faint echoes in our last chapter, had taken place; when all the guests had withdrawn, and left the Aubreys their Paradise untenanted by serpent or by beast; in the pleasant

hour, we say, of love and confidence, before retiring to sleep, when Blanche had sung to her husband one dear song, all for himself—she said to him during the chat which ensued, as follows :

“Did you notice, love, how bitterly Mr. Sting-ray spoke of the new judge, who has been attacked so vehemently in some of the newspapers for his summing-up, as they call it, I believe, in that dreadful murder case of the religious attorney at Sluice-in-the-Wold, in Clodshire, or some such locality? If you remember, the man of law had legally plundered his own mother, and left her to the tender mercies of the workhouse ; he had driven his only sister from home shoeless in a snow-storm, and caused her dishonour and suicide ; and had so overworked and baited his step-son, whom he had got in his office as a kind of drudge, and whom he had previously robbed of everything by his legal machinations, that the poor wretch went mad and dashed out his brains with a stool in his own office.”

“Yes, yes,” replied Arthur, “it was a clear case of manslaughter, even in the strictest point of view. Morally speaking, it was justifiable homicide, and that, in my opinion, should have been the verdict. Only what attorney would be safe?”

“Oh, you wicked creature!” said Blanche, “but really, I dare say, that a good many are as bad.”

“Well,” said Arthur, “I know one or two in this country, whom I believe capable of anything, and not unlike the man who was murdered—I mean punished—in so terrible a manner. If I recollect aright, it was found, after his death, that he had de-

frauded every one, speculated in all the moneys intrusted to him, drawn up sham mortgages, and I don't know what besides."

Blanche nodded assent.

"The fact of the lawyer being at family prayers before tea, when the assassin rushed in," she continued, "excited all the sanctified world against the prisoner. Don't you remember how the ladies of Credlington subscribed for a tea and prayer service for the Reverend Jabez Howle, after he had been acquitted, through the looseness of the surgical evidence, for beating a sickly page-boy to death?"

"All this is very true, dear," said Aubrey; "but you were speaking of Stingray. He said that the judge was much to blame for talking sentiment to the jury, and directing a verdict of manslaughter. Well, I don't see that Mr. Stingray has said more than many others."

"Yes, but he has," replied Blanche. "He heaped the most malignant sarcasm on him. He said he never was a lawyer, and was only known as the author of a feeble, but laboriously polished drama; he the great advocate, the ripe scholar, the accomplished orator, whose genius all the world agreed to admire. And all this, because it happens that one or two journals, from some personal pique, have systematically written him down. Do you know that it was the judge who first made Stingray known; that for years he has been a diner at his table, and his constant guest; that for years he followed him and flattered him, his generous patron, and warmest friend, at a time when he most needed one? Now, he is his

worst enemy, and all to please and pander to his calumniators. He pursues him in a manner quite *acharné*, as the French term it, and in such a tone, too. ‘My poor friend,’ he says, ‘what a dreadful mess it is! I always said he was unfit for the Bench. He must resign, and what is worse he will never regain his practice. It is very sad, poor fellow! for he has nothing but his salary, and has been enormously extravagant. Those parties are not given for nothing. Open house, you know’—yes, the house always open to him, to Stingray, the false friend!—and then he apes candour, and says, ‘I tell him so myself; I said, “my dear judge, it is a frightful, a dreadful blunder.” Between ourselves, his nerves are upset. He never can recover it. How could he make such a fool of himself? It is ruin, perfect, frightful, hideous ruin. You cannot think how grieved I am,’ he adds; ‘but what can one say in such a case?’ Now,” said Blanche, “the story about the judge’s nerves, I can answer for it, is false; for I saw his wife yesterday, and she said he was quite cheerful and happy, and Lord Madeiraville told me that the Government think nothing at all of it, and that the Prime Minister expressed himself most kindly, and the Lord Chancellor smiled and said that his learned friend had only shown a heart worthy of one of the brightest intellects and clearest heads that had ever adorned the judicial bench in England, and the newspapers are beginning to alter their tone, and Sir Harry Luckless says it is ‘a sell,’ and a ‘mare’s-nest,’ you know his phraseology, dear, and——”

Here Arthur stopped her in a manner that even a loving wife, in the full exercise of female oratory, could not complain of. "And," he continued, "you are his advocate, my darling little Portia, and that is worth all the world besides. So you think Mr. Stingray very wicked, and treacherous, and cruel, and all that. But it is the way of the world, my dear, and it would be highly impolitic in us to make an enemy of him."

"Oh!" said Blanche, "what is the use of making a friend of such a man? There are friends who constantly make use of the opportunities afforded by intimacy to frame an indictment against their greatest benefactors. When the time arrives to throw off the mask, should any base and selfish motive arise, they are well posted in your weaknesses, your misfortunes, and your faults; and should they fail, in fact, they supply the invention, to which dates and circumstances give an air of truth, of vraisemblance, which otherwise would be wanting. Let Mr. Stingray be my enemy rather than my friend; if the remarks which he made to-night be a specimen of the Dead Sea fruit of his friendship. If ever he should turn against us, Arthur, depend upon it we should fare no better at his hands."

"I am not afraid," replied her husband, "of all he can do, when that terrible epoch shall arrive. Besides, what *could* he say against *us*?"

"It is not the truth one has to fear in such cases," said Blanche.

"Well," rejoined Arthur, "let him say that we lead quite a cat-and-dog life; let him accuse you of

extravagance, and me of inconstancy; let him say that we were never happy together; in fact, let him do his worst, and how much the worse shall we be for it?"

And he pressed her affectionately to his heart as he said it.

"As for the judge," continued Aubrey, "he can defend himself; and, upon my word, I think he did go a little too far for a judge. Not but what," he added, laughing, "as a private individual, I more than coincide with his words. I am not sure that the act of vengeance on the attorney was not a praiseworthy deed—a species of martyrdom. I should not be sorry if half of the whole army of lawyers were shot or hanged to-morrow, or all of them—let me see, about sixteen thousand, I think—struck off the rolls of mortality in a heap. What a crowding there would be at a certain place; worse than the jetty at Margate about the end of a hot July. The whole system of solicitors or attorneys is a gross excrescence, and was never intended by our ancestors to exist in the monstrous shape that it does. By-the-bye, dear, remember that I have to go and see my lawyers—I mean Grinderby and Cousens—to-morrow. There is something they want to see me about, and I rather think it is of an unpleasant nature about a mortgage that should have been paid off. Do you know I have sadly neglected my business affairs since my poor father's death? First I went abroad, and then I fell in love with you, which drove everything else out of my head; and since we were married, we have done nothing but amuse ourselves. Heigh ho! I must see to all these things some day, or there will

be a mess. Now, don't you think Phil Cousens is a capital fellow—quite a model lawyer, so pleasant and friendly?"

Blanche shook her head.

"My love," she said, slowly and gravely, "you do not like me to interfere or even talk about your matters of business, much less to express my opinion about those whom you employ and esteem. You are far better able to judge of Mr. Cousens than I am. You have known him a long time. But, since you ask me, I reply to you like a dutiful little wife, that I do not like Mr. Cousens at all."

"Upon my word, Blanche, you are in a strange mood to-night for such an amiable dear creature as you are. Nothing save aversions and dislikes!"

"Of Mr. Stingray," said Blanche, "I spoke thus freely, because he made me angry to-night with his abominable treachery, and I look on him as an acquaintance rather than as a friend. Of Mr. Cousens, your intimate associate and lawyer, you asked my opinion and I have given it. In the first place, if I might venture to say something——"

"Out with it, you wicked and merciless satirist! Out with it, Madam Timon and Cassandra in one—what dreadful things do you apprehend from poor Phil?"

"I was going to observe," replied Blanche, "that I have heard my father say, that no one should employ a friend as a lawyer, or make a lawyer a friend. He used to say the same thing of doctors, but in a less degree."

"With all due respect," put in Arthur, somewhat

eagerly, "I don't agree with your father! What! because one knows and esteems a fellow——"

"Esteems?" interrupted Blanche, "say, rather, 'likes'—you don't, you cannot esteem Mr. Cousens!"

"Well, 'likes,' if you prefer it," he returned. "I was about to say, that simply because one likes a man, according to this doctrine, one is not to put anything in his way, not to employ him, not to do him a good turn in the way of business. Was I not right to cut that precious old stupid firm, under whose advice my father made a will, long enough to furnish litigation for a century, or so long as the property supplied funds, if any one interested, however remotely, were only fool or knave enough to commence it? Why it was through old Brewer, the senior partner, who helped to concoct that precious document, that I was made only a life tenant with a clause of forfeiture; that proper powers of leasing minerals were left out, contrary to my father's express intention, and which has shut me out of thousands a-year, and that I am tied and bound as never man yet was——"

"Nay, dearest," said Blanche slyly, "I have heard you say more than once, that it has probably been the means when you were younger and—and—more careless, and thoughtless, of retaining the estate in your hands at all, and saving you from utter ruin."

"I say foolish things sometimes," was the rejoinder. "I tell you, Blanche, that this will is enough to drive a man frantic, when I think of all the expense, bother, and trouble that it causes, and that I cannot do anything with the property at all."

"Well, dear!" said his wife, "of course, you know best; but as for Mr. Cousens, I don't think he is a man of sufficient weight and dignity of character to transact your affairs. Be assured he is a heartless sort of man, capable of flattery, and far too much of a coxcomb."

"What prejudiced creatures you women are," said Aubrey; "I declare this is all because he wears a white hat, with crape round it, and patent-leather boots in the morning."

"And a very good reason too," rejoined Blanche, laughing. "The fact is—say what you will—he is no gentleman."

"Poor Phil!" said his friend and client. "I am sure he admires and esteems you sufficiently. He said only the other day, that he considered you the most beautiful, amiable, and accomplished being he had ever met with."

"Which I consider a piece of great impertinence," said Blanche. "Tell me, do you invite such homage from your solicitor?"

"Nay, he did not say it to me."

"I am glad of it, Arthur," said Blanche haughtily and composedly; "for to tell you the truth, I should have thought such a speech made to you greatly wanting in respect, and have augured ill of your affairs from it."

"Hoity-toity," was Aubrey's reply; "you astonish me, Blanche, I must own, with the tone of your remarks, and the severity of your views. Stingray has made you quite misanthropical, I declare, in a single night."

“Remember, dearest,” said Blanche, “that you have never asked my opinion of Mr. Cousens before. I own that from the first I mistrusted and disliked him. His vulgar, fulsome compliments, when he congratulated us on our marriage, and many other things, have combined to strengthen the view I have taken. I sincerely hope that it may turn out to be a wrong, or at least an exaggerated one. Do you remember that day at dinner, when he made a sort of boast that he never forgave an injury, nor omitted to be revenged, if offended? Do you call to mind what he said about killing any one who had done him a wrong?”

“It was only bounce and nonsense,” said Arthur. “Phil is the best fellow alive. Didn’t he cause me to forego the prosecution of the rascal Johnson?”

“Yes,” replied Blanche, “but Johnson had injured you, not him.”

“Well,” said Arthur, “what do you infer from his idle fanfaronade?”

“Merely, that he is cowardly, egotistic, vain, and treacherous, even if less vindictive than he describes himself to be,” was the answer.

“My dear Blanche,” said Arthur, lighting a bougie, “I assure you that for once you are entirely mistaken. Phil Cousens may be absurdly over-dressed, but is a sharp man of business, I can tell you; he may talk nonsense sometimes—must we be condemned for that?” he asked in a rallying tone. “He may speak of revenge, but he is the kindest-hearted fellow in the world. Did he not nurse me as carefully and

tenderly as a woman, when I lay sick of a fever in the Mediterranean?"

"And has he not had the conduct of your affairs ever since?" interrupted Blanche. "Has not your purse met his private necessities? You should not give me your banker's book to add up, if you don't wish me to know these things. If ever you should be in adversity—which God forbid—it is not 'honest Phil' who will minister to you, depend upon that. And now I won't talk any more upon these odious topics, and I shall go to bed."

Arthur would fain have convinced her that she was mistaken about Mr. Cousens's character; but she playfully refused to listen or respond any more. He tried to elicit her opinion of Mr. Grinderby, the senior partner of the firm, but in vain.

"Come," said Arthur, "*he* never wore shiny boots in the morning or the evening either, I should think; and I don't believe that he ever praised you or any other woman in his life. There is an ascetic and eccentric being for you, Blanche! I should think Grinderby would fairly take to his heels at the sight of a petticoat approaching his dingy chambers."

It was a slight mistake. Mr. Grinderby had done more mischief, in his spider-like way, than half the young bloods who make the Haymarket hideous by night. He had an establishment at Hoxton presided over by a black-browed beauty, who fought with him occasionally, when she had indulged in an extra glass of gin. At that moment he wore two slips of black plaister on his cheek, which even his clerks attributed to a scorbutic affection of the skin.

He was a coarse and calculating, cold-blooded, but fiercely sensual old hypocrite. And he had dared to regard Blanche herself with an expression in his glassy grey eyes, that would have caused her to shudder, had she met his look. For he admired and hated her at the same time. He admired her person and hated her mind. With his strong, square jaw, bull-neck, and undersized figure, his fierce appetite and pitiless temper, he resembled a human hyena, as much as a London attorney could; and when he shambled forth on a foggy night, and sought the Hoxton omnibus on his road to his pleasant retreat, few things more noxious and venomous went prowling forth from their secret hiding-place and lair in the howling deserts of Africa than this parchment-faced, dyspeptic lawyer with his evil frown, and the livid circlets of indigestion and sordid plotting round his spectacled, malevolent eyes. It need hardly be affirmed that Blanche did not regard the senior partner Grinderby with much esteem. True, she had seen very little of him in comparison with the elegant "Phil." Her interviews with the former were brief, and had been limited to two. Still he was not likely to prepossess her in his favour. She was reluctant, however, to offend or annoy her husband by any further condemnation of any one whom he was pleased to take into his confidence. As it was, he showed a little, just a little temper about her aversion to Cousens.

"Well," she said, "I must say I have often heard the proverb, 'Love me, love my dog,' but I never yet heard, 'Love me, love my lawyer.'"

Arthur could not help smiling at the oddity of the comparison. Somehow, a recollection stole over him of a noble dog of the St. Bernard breed, which he had shot for attacking Cousens when that gentlemanly young fellow was on a visit at his country-house. The circumstances were these. Some years before, Arthur had, with thoughtless rashness, unloosed Géant, who was kept chained in the court-yard of the mansion of a certain sporting baronet where he was staying. The animal was known to be so fierce that the servants looked on in fear and anxiety lest he should turn and rend the stranger, who, however, patted him, gave him a stick to carry, and took him out for a morning stroll. During the stroll man and dog got so friendly and familiar, that Arthur took quite a fancy to Géant. On meeting his host at breakfast, he was congratulated by him on his escape, and censured for the risk he had run. "I would have bet ten to one," said Sir Frederick, "that he would have had you down when you went up to him. If you like to have him now, he is yours; for my servants are all afraid of him, and he does not in consequence get properly cleaned and fed." Arthur accepted the gift, and the dog became his constant companion when in the country, and grew quite docile and good-tempered. Still it was considered dangerous for a stranger to approach him when chained up. Among the boasts of Mr. Cousens was one that he could awe a dog by the terrors of his eye, and consequently that he could walk up to the most ferocious mastiff or bull-dog and pat him with impunity. On that gentleman arriving at the hall,

Arthur had, notwithstanding, especially cautioned him against Géant. "No fear," said his dashing legal adviser, "Phil's awake! Not a dog in Europe dare bite me." Now the fact was, that Mr. Cousens was by no means courageous in a canine point of view. He was rather more afraid of dogs than the ordinary run of men. But one day after lunch, having imbibed much claret, he strolled out alone and took it into his head to accost Géant, who lay outside his kennel beating the ground with his tail, and looking upwards, as Cousens thought, in the most good-humoured manner. "Poor fellow," said the accomplished Phil, "lie down then." As the dog was lying down, he could hardly be said to obey the instruction. "So, that's a good dawg," continued young *Fieri-facias*, whose inflamed visage at the moment suggested the name. Géant arose and shook himself lazily with a kind of repellant air, as if he sniffed a bill of costs as the price of so much unnecessary polite attention. Upon this Phil stooped and picked up a twig, which he held menacingly over the superior animal. A low growl might have warned him, but it did not. He was in an exultant mood. Aubrey had just placed confidence in him, and ecstatic visions of plunder and betrayal rushed through his brain. He had just settled the fact that he should have Aubrey's business; and he felt, to use his own language to himself, that it was four hundred pounds a-year to him for life. He was thinking whether he should and could dissolve partnership with Grinderby, and set up for himself with such a client as Aubrey for stock-in-trade. Why should Grinderby, whom he

always hated, and whose life-blood he could have spilt at that moment, in his thoughts, as freely as his patron's claret; why should Grinderby, who sneered openly at the patent-leather boots, participate in this mighty haul due to his, Phil's, "friendship" and cleverness? True, Grinderby was a capital lawyer, and he, Phil, knew nothing of the business, but could he not get a managing clerk? Ha! the idea emboldened him. At that moment Géant personified in his eyes the obedient, grey-haired, and somewhat bald legal menial with the blue bag, who should fetch and carry his law for him. Yes, it should be a *sine quâ non*, that he should be at least slightly bald, and he would keep him at arm's length, thus. "Down, sir, down!" he said, advancing a step, and giving Géant a smart flick. "Down, I tell you!" Now Géant, who had never carried a blue bag in his life, nor done a dirtier action than it falls to the lot of every dog to do, and who did not know what was meant, and who would have been a great deal more savage had he known, and who in all probability did not like Phil's legal odour, and still more probably was guided by the mysterious instincts of an honest dog, suddenly responded by leaping up and seizing Phil's arm just below the elbow in his capacious jaws. Visions of legal and accomplished robbery, conceit, vanity, and the fumes of Lafitte and Chateau Margaux fled all at once, and the dapper Mr. Cousens actually screamed with pain and affright. Here was a *ca. sa.* against which he had no legal remedy. Out rushed Aubrey, attracted by his friend's cries for help, and seizing a heavy implement used in brewing, which

lay near, struck the dog on the head with such force that he loosed his hold of Cousens, whom Aubrey instantly dragged back. But being still within the radius of the animal's chain, quick as thought he seized the now almost fainting lawyer again, this time getting even a better hold of him above the elbow. In vain did Aubrey pound the dog with his fist. Géant had served his writ and held on like a chancery suit. Had Cousens at that moment come into a marquise with thirty thousand pounds a-year, the unity of the dog's purpose would not have been disturbed. Aubrey had been shooting at a mark that morning, and had left his rifle loaded in a little room adjoining the back entrance close to where this scene took place. To dart into this room, seize the rifle and shoot the dog through the heart, was, as the foolish novelists say, "thé work of a moment." Géant rolled over; and after a few struggles, his ghost howled mournfully on the banks of the Styx, provoking a return from Cerberus. As he stretched out his fore-paws in a last convulsive effort, he gave Aubrey a look so fond, so piteous, and so wonderfully expressive, that it would have furnished Landseer or Ansdell with a suggestion for the delineation of the death of the ever-famous Brach Gellert himself. Mr. Cousens staggered against the wall, sick, torn, and bleeding. After drinking a glass of brandy, and being assured that the dog was dead, he gave his late adversary a kick, accompanied by a ghastly look of detestation and a curse, and went into the house to await the arrival of a surgeon from the neighbouring town of Lyborough. As for Géant,

he was buried about one o'clock A.M. by the light of "a lantern dimly burning." For, as Aubrey's keeper, a stalwart Highlander, observed, "there's a rough lot about here, that needn't know he's gone, puir fallow." In truth, long after his death his memory served as a terror to the nailers and miners, who were wont to stray over the grounds in gangs, accompanied by bull-dogs and curs, and often with a pair of short gun-barrels, and the accompanying stock stuck in the capacious pockets of one or other of them. Strange to say, or rather naturally enough, on consideration, the part of Géant was universally taken in the servants' hall that evening.

"I wish he had killed him outright," said Mr. Tops, the groom.

"A nasty fellow! what rights had he to go teasing the dog?" said Mary, the housemaid.

"Depend upon it, the poor creetur knowed what he was a doing of," said stout Mrs. Wilkins, the cook.

"I wish master mayn't repent of it," quoth Jem, the gardener. "Dogs know pretty well who they're biting of. We shall have all the fruit stolen now. If *he* arn't a thief, as the dog got hold on, may I never grow early grass again!"

The gamekeeper said nothing, but he puffed the smoke from his pipe with a great air of disgust and anger. *He*, at least, had lost a staunch ally and supporter. "I wish I had been there," he thought. "He'd have let go for me, I'm just positeeve. It's varra odd, he wouldn't obey the maister. Puir fallow! he had dootless a strang reason for sic a behaviour."

All this did not come to Arthur's ears ; but he thought of Géant and his expiring look, after his conversation with Blanche about the dashing Phil Cousens, and the question *would* intrude itself, in spite of his better (?) reason : “ Was the friend false, and the dog true, after all ? ”

CHAPTER VIII.

A LONG ARM OUT OF THE GRAVE.

To disinherit an idle or disobedient son is a luxury of property which an Englishman alone knows how to enjoy in a thorough and systematic manner. To shut one eye and look through a glassful of ruby port or purple claret with the other, and to say, "I've cut him off with a shilling, sir, I have—— Let him starve with the girl whom he has chosen; yes, sir, starve!" and then to drink your wine with a smack of the lips, and throw yourself back in self-satisfied contemplation of the rosy future you have provided for the young couple, so far as is in your power, is a delectation worthy of the haughty islander alone. A French father cannot so indulge himself by law, except on the English stage.

The "I've made my money, sir, and can do what I like with it" boast, is one pre-eminently characteristic of a nation which prostrates itself before the "gilded veal" with such splendid devotion, that were the soil sufficiently clayey, the entire national features would be self-cast in mud.

A slighter and weaker variety of the modern "noble Roman" progenitor type exists in the person of him who leaves his estates or money burdened with conditions, forfeitures, and the like. In this case a man loves his worldly substance so well, that he cannot make up his mind to part with it altogether even at his death. He thus leaves a phantom to guard his treasures, a jack-in-the-box which pops up whenever the lawyers open their tin cases, screeching out, "Aha! you thought I was dead, did you? You're mistaken, you see!" Alas! his name still lives in the attorney's office; it is uttered in Chancery-lane; it is bandied to and fro like an invisible shuttlecock in the Law Courts; it becomes not unfrequently a byword and a curse in the second and third generations of his posterity and kind. And sometimes the phantom outlives the substance, till there remains nothing of the property so tied up and guarded save perchance a few empty deed-boxes, whereon is painted a litigious name!—*The History of a Will.* By Cramer Whittaker. *Introd.*, vol. i.

IF a man be desirous of strongly perpetuating his memory, for a time at least, in this world after his departure, there is a more sure method than to leave

behind him a pillar or a monument, a "storied urn" or an "animated bust." That is, provided he be possessed of a large fortune in land and houses, shares and funds. Let him only make a long and complicated will, with half a score of codicils, and thus succeed in stretching, as it has been called, "a long arm out of the grave." He will be remembered, if not with gratitude, yet with satisfaction, by the lawyers; counsel, solicitors, and judges. He will be constantly thought of by his family and those directly and indirectly concerned, and his name will be kept before the public very sufficiently by the reports in the newspapers. Nay, it may even become a precedent and a household word, like *Thellusson*, or the *Baron de Bode*; the latter a victim in a somewhat different way to injustice and the glorious uncertainty of the law. There is, at least, no danger of such a one being forgotten for some time to come. The father of our hero—for so we suppose we must call him—had made a will of portentous dimensions. It had been his delight and recreation of an evening, after dinner, when a respectable, elderly, muddle-headed lawyer of the old school waited on him, time after time, and the document was concocted by the pair over sundry bottles of port wine; the client first indulging in a nap, with a doyley over his head, while the old lawyer sipped, and blinked, and cracked his walnuts, and looked wondrous wise, awaiting the 'fresh instructions of his patron. Between them they had tied up young *Aubrey* wonderfully tight. He was, it is true, left heir and legatee to his father's estate and fortune;

but he could not anticipate the rents, or mortgage, or sell, or become bankrupt, without incurring the penalty of forfeiture. Among the old man's hobbies was the idea that valuable seams of lead and silver lay under the chief part of his land. Indeed, he had spent some thousands in mining operations just before his death. But, although his instructions to Arthur were peremptory not to work the mines himself, but to lease the royalties, by some singular oversight he had left no power to do so. Accordingly, after his death, Arthur was compelled to abandon the shafts, in spite of the flattering prospect which presented itself. Nothing could then enable him to lease, save a special Act of Parliament, which he had not a chance of getting; since the interests of powerful neighbours, including the lord lieutenant of the county, were arrayed against him. The old City shipping agent, his father, fond and proud as he was of his only son, justly considered him an extravagant fellow, and had the worst possible opinion of his habits of business, his knowledge of the world, and his prudence and sagacity. True, he had unintentionally done everything in his power to make the young man what he was. He was generous and miserly to him by turns—only that the miserly fits were the longer and more frequent. He was always talking economy and prudence at him. He expected him to occupy the position of a gentleman, and yet denied him the means. He would not let him ride, shoot, or cultivate any accomplishment, if he could help it. He disgusted him by endeavouring to drive him, *nolens volens*, to the Bar, for which

Arthur had not the slightest inclination. When a mere child, he would torment him by calling him Lord Chancellor, and making him recite before his guests. One of his earliest presents was "Blackstone's Commentaries," and he would pester the boy with points of law, and legal anecdotes about the wonderful career of shop-boys and errand-lads who became judges. He rigidly forbade him all amusements, tried to stop the desultory reading of which Arthur was very fond, and stripped his early life of every flower and green leaf which he thought would interfere with the solid pursuit of wig and woolsack, a silk gown and the inevitable lord chancellorship. Often did the young man try to persuade his father to bring him up to his own business; since to dream of a commission in the Army or Navy was sheer rebellion and idiocy in his father's eyes. The youth was sent at a tender age to a public school, and in due time to college. At the latter he fell an easy victim to the system of credit, which has ruined so many impulsive and generous youths on the threshold of life. How else could he keep the company of the wealthy scions of aristocratic houses, which his father expected him to do, on an allowance more suited to the requirements and position of a Bible clerk? But then, argued the father, "did not the late Lord Quirkborough educate himself on eighty pounds a year, and live to be Chief Justice of England?" Then came the inevitable humiliating exposure of the debts—the bitterness, the reproaches, the harsh ratings, and heart-burnings; after which young Aubrey was placed *en penitence* in a City lodging, and allowed

three pounds a week, paid by his father's cashier, whilst he was supposed to study the law, being duly entered at an Inn of Court. Study the law? He borrowed all he could—a few thousands on the absolute reversion of a sum of money coming to him under his mother's marriage settlement—and he studied "life in London," in a way that his father little dreamt of; or the voluminous will would have been annulled by an extremely brief codicil, and some hospital have been so much the richer by the chief portion of the young gentleman's inheritance.

Mr. Aubrey, senior, died, however, without acquiring this painful knowledge, and with a far higher opinion of his son's prudence and conduct than he had ever before entertained. For about a month or so before his death, the old gentleman suddenly sent his heir down into Devon and Cornwall to collect his rents, an act with him of unprecedented trust and confidence. We do not insinuate that he ever doubted the strict honour of his son, but he had always treated him as a child in money matters; and although he would talk with him, and pretend to consult him in a general way, he never suffered him to know anything about his financial position, nor to attain any practical knowledge of his affairs. When Arthur met the tenantry, they were delighted to see the young squire among them, and, by some strange chance, they paid up their rents on that occasion better than ever they had been known to do before. Arthur carried the money to his father with a complete and excellent account. He did not even pay

his expenses out of what he had received, and said nothing about them until the old gentleman questioned him. The latter was greatly cheered and delighted. He inquired what his son had spent, and seemed highly pleased when he looked at the account, in which there was not a single extravagant item. He paid it, and added, with great ceremony, a five-pound note, telling his son he had earned the money. After dinner, to Arthur's astonishment, his father sent out for a couple of cigars, and lighting one in the most awkward manner, desired his son to smoke! If there was one thing which the elder Aubrey disliked it was to see a young man smoke, and Arthur had never known his father indulge in such a luxury before. Old Aubrey knew that his son had acquired the habit, and had often severely rated him about it. He now informed him that, at proper time and in moderation, such a thing might be tolerated. He looked upon a man who smoked in the forenoon as a scamp and a profligate; but now his son was his guest, and he wished him to make free and enjoy himself. Arthur could scarcely believe his senses. A third glass of wine, and an invitation to smoke the abhorred weed, and with the paternal participation too. Was this a snare, a quaint artifice, to draw him out? No, he dismissed the thought. At length his father bade him good-night, embraced him tenderly, and uttered a few broken words of commendation, which brought the tears to the eyes of both. A fortnight passed, and the old man would not suffer Arthur to omit a day in attending upon him. One

morning a message came for him to call earlier than usual. He found his father in a somewhat excited state.

"Let us take a turn in the garden," said the old man, feebly; "I have something to say to you."

They walked together for about ten minutes, during which Mr. Aubrey gathered a rose, and spoke of its delicate beauty and wonderful organisation, of the bounties of Nature and Providence, and of his own approaching dissolution.

"I shall never see this garden bloom again," he said.

Then suddenly he changed the conversation, and told Arthur that he desired a prompt and important service from him.

"I am going to the City," he said; "I want to discharge my cashier, Mr. Manvers."

"Discharge Manvers?" cried Arthur.

"Yes, sir, and why not?" answered his father, in an angry and querulous tone. "I have determined to dismiss him this very day. He is a violent man, and I want you to go with me and protect me if necessary. I am ill, sir, very ill, and I need your support."

"But what has he done, sir?" inquired Arthur; "I thought he possessed your implicit confidence. I thought that Mr. Manvers——"

"Listen," interrupted Mr. Aubrey. "I am certain that he has robbed me, robbed me of thousands. It was only yesterday that I suspected—made the discovery. He has robbed me for years, and to-day he must go. I have ordered the carriage, and you

must go with me. I am very ill." Saying this, he leaned heavily on his son, and added, "Come, sir, be ready!"

Arthur was astounded. He thought his father had lost his senses.

"What! Manvers a thief? Manvers, the trusted, confidential cashier of twelve years' standing; Manvers, who had paid him his three pounds per week stipend; Manvers, the type of the respectable City clerk, who had all his father's papers, knew all his secrets, drew all his cheques, had the control of thousands; Manvers, whom his father had lately presented with a hundred guineas on his recovery from a brief illness, and who wrote a hand like copper-plate; Manvers, the portly, the clean, with his filbert-shaped, beautiful nails, and white waistcoats; Manvers, who was so patronising to him, Arthur Aubrey, in spite of their relative positions!"

He looked at his father with fear and trembling. Had he taken leave of his senses? Was this strange fancy the result of an overdose of some opiate prescribed for his complaint? Was that firm brain softening under the terrible influence of a mortal malady? His doubts were soon set at rest.

"Arthur," said his father, "you know, of late years, I have not myself paid much attention to the business."

Arthur did not exactly know this, but he bowed in assent.

"I have left my books and cash matters entirely in the hands of that man. All my deeds and papers are in his keeping. What if he should be a scoundrel?"

"But he cannot be, father," cried Arthur, "Consider, sir, how he is respected in the City. I have known that man myself to be quite unhappy because the books did not balance by a few pence."

"Yes," said Mr. Aubrey, "he keeps his books beautifully, by double entry, which, strange to say, I never understood."

"About three months since," resumed Arthur, "I called at Bingley's Wharf (the name of Mr. Aubrey's place of business), "and I found Mr. Manvers quite vexed and irritable. I called," he added, with some hesitation, "for the arrears of my allowance. When I asked him for it, the desk was covered with bills, cheques, securities, and what not, and the cash-box was at his side. He opened it, and showed me gold and notes in profusion. 'Young gentleman,' he said, 'I am sorry to refuse you ; but I have no order to pay the money from your father, who is in Scotland. I cannot give you anything until his return, or until I hear from him. For all that this box contains, I would not pay a sixpence without his order.' I urged him in vain. I told him that he knew it was due, but his resolution was immovable. I told him how much I wanted the money. 'Not to save you from a gaol,' he answered. 'Look here, he said. 'Do you see these figures?' And he pointed to innumerable sheets covered with them. 'I am wrong in my balance only threepence-halfpenny, and I have been up all night striving to find out the error. No, sir,' he added, 'with all due respect to his employer's only son, John Manvers cannot endanger his character for strict commercial integrity.

That money is not available, not a penny of it, without orders: I would not do it to save my life.' I then asked him to lend me a portion of the amount, but he said he had not got it, as he had remitted all his own spare cash to bury his father in North Wales."

"He lied, sir!" shouted the old man. "Listen to me. For the last five or six years I have been doing twice the business I ever had, and my profits have been smaller. With all my experience, I have been a hoodwinked fool. I have placed unlimited confidence in this man, and he has robbed me, I tell you. After his illness, six months ago, I made him a present of one hundred pounds, and he protested that it was a boon of inestimable benefit. But Providence has caused him to unmask himself, and put foolishness into his mouth to betray him. Only yesterday he came here on business. I was a little better, and made him stay to dinner. He drank more freely than I have ever known him to do, and protested that he indulged thus, owing to his joy at seeing me so much better. At last, he suddenly said that he wished to ask my advice in a matter of great importance to himself. I replied that I was at his service. He then asked me in which railway line I thought the safest and best investment could be made. I answered that I did not care for any; for that I had never been bitten by the mania, and I judged there would be a great and sudden depreciation. 'But,' I added, 'there is the London and North-Western, in which I myself have some five thousand pounds. There is not much danger there

to your friend—for I presume it is a friend for whom you are anxious to invest in that particular species of stock.’ I then asked him if he would tell me who the person was, for whom he was making the inquiry. To my surprise, he replied—for himself. ‘Allow me,’ I said, ‘to congratulate you, Mr. Manvers. May I ask how you have been so fortunate as to receive this accession of capital?’ ‘Oh,’ he replied, in some confusion, ‘it is a mere nothing; a few hundreds left me by my father, who died lately, sir, as you are aware.’ ‘Oh, indeed!’ I replied, ‘I am glad to hear it. Well, I think you cannot do better than invest in the London and North-Western.’ And so the matter dropped. But I knew that his father had died a bankrupt. That man, sir, has been robbing me for years.”

Arthur Aubrey could not bring himself to the same conclusion. He suggested that Manvers had, perhaps, been lucky in one or two small speculations, admitting fully the danger of such a proceeding on the part of a merchant’s cashier. Perhaps he had acquired the money by some fair and simple means; but did not like to tell all his secrets, and so had substituted an invention, not altogether innocent or creditable, but still far short of the elder Aubrey’s grave suspicions. The old man only shook his head.

“He has robbed me,” he said, “and I shall dismiss him this very day. He is a violent man, and may resist or abuse me. You are strong, and a boxer. I had you taught early. You must accompany and protect your father in his old age and illness. He has often protected you.”

Arthur sighed and acquiesced. He was accustomed to acquiesce in his father's views. Besides, he was bound to support him, morally and physically, were he right or wrong. Accordingly, they went to the City together.

On the way, Mr. Aubrey was silent. When they arrived he saluted Mr. Manvers and the other clerks, and entered his private room—that room where Arthur had received so many severe rebukes, admonitions, and scoldings. The old man read his letters, and looked at the "Times." Then he called Manvers in.

"Mr. Manvers," he said, "is there not a cheque to sign? Have you filled it up?"

"Yes, sir, it is ready," was the reply.

Arthur saw that it was for eight hundred pounds.

"You will see and pay it yourself," Mr. Manvers," said Mr. Aubrey.

"Certainly, sir," replied the cashier. "I am glad to see you so much better, sir, to-day."

"I shall never be better, Mr. Manvers," was the answer. "I see the Bank of England has raised its discount to seven per cent. It will be higher yet. It is a beautiful day. Will you order the carriage round for me?"

And the old man, assisted by Arthur, put on his great-coat, and left without any further observation or comment. All the way back Mr. Aubrey was silent. Not a word did he say about Manvers. Even when Arthur said, "I am glad, father, that you seem to have changed your mind," he looked at his son, but did not reply. When Arthur took his leave, all that he said was, that he thought he might want

him early the next day; and if he did, he would send a special messenger to the Temple.

The next day the messenger came early indeed, so early that Arthur apprehended the worst news. His father had passed a wretched night, and wished to see him immediately. On arriving, he was shown into his father's room. He found him in bed, and was greeted by him with feverish impatience.

"Reach me pen, ink, and paper," he said, "and sit down there."

Arthur gave them, but the invalid required his aid to prop him up. He wrote, however, boldly and firmly as ever, as follows:

"TO MR. JOHN SWINDLES MANVERS.

"SIR,—On receipt of this you will at once deliver to my son, Arthur Aubrey, possession of all my property in your hands, with the keys of my safes and drawers, and obey him as myself in everything.

" EDWARD AUBREY."

"Now, sir," he said to his son, "I expect you to act as a man, and carry out my instructions to the letter. If you do not, you must abide by the consequences; and, hark ye, I will find those who will. You will go at once to the wharf. My carriage is waiting. You will call Mr. Manvers into my private room, and tell him you have my orders to take possession of everything, and to dismiss him instantly on the spot. You will take the keys of his drawers, and suffer him to remove nothing, not a letter nor a paper. You will lock everything and come back.

Stay, you will first go to my bankers, Messrs. Jones, Browne, and Jones, and ask them to recommend you an experienced accountant in whom they have confidence, to commence an examination into my books to-morrow without fail. You will agree to pay whatever they think fit to name for his services.

"My dear father," said Arthur, "what cause can I allege?"

"Say it is my will. Tell him to go quietly, and you will make an excuse for him to the other clerks. Let him say he is ill, if he likes. Add, if you please, that you know I have left him five hundred pounds to assist in administering my will; and tell him, if you like, that if all is right, as you hope and believe it will be, that he shall have that and two hundred and fifty pounds besides from yourself. You may say five hundred pounds if you please; you will never have to pay it. Go, sir, at once. What are you stopping for? Go, I say. Be off!"

"But, father," said Arthur, "what if he should set me at defiance and refuse to go? What if he should say that—that—you are ill, and—and——"

"Mad, sir, I suppose you would say!" cried his father. "What then, sir? Obey my orders, or I shall despise you for a poor weak-spirited fool. It is not too late. I will send for my lawyers, and leave my fortune to a hospital, and give you an annuity of three hundred pounds a-year, paid quarterly, for your life."

"There is not a man on the premises but will prefer to obey Mr. Manvers rather than me, should he, as he may and probably will do, refuse to yield to so

sudden and extraordinary a mandate," rejoined the young man.

"Arthur," said his father, "if Manvers should dare to resist my authority vested in your person, seize him by the throat, as you are my son, and call in the aid of the police. Don't let him remove a paper. Allow no subterfuge. Accept no excuse. Not another word, sir. I order you on my death-bed to take that paper, and instantly to discharge that man. Hesitate one moment, and I will never see your face again. Nay, I will curse so faint-hearted ——"

"Hold!" cried Arthur. "Your orders shall be obeyed to the letter, come what may."

So saying, he turned to leave the room. As he left, the old man stretched his arms towards him. Arthur tenderly embraced his father, as tears streamed down the faces of both.

"Go, my boy, and God's blessing be with you!" were the last words he heard.

It was a dismal journey to the City for Arthur that day from Dulwich. The more he thought of it, the more convinced he felt that his father was labouring under a delusion. Should he call and consult his father's solicitors? No! that would be an act of disobedience. He would do precisely as he was bid; but deal as kindly and gently with Manvers and his character, as he possibly could. It would be awkward, if the trusted cashier, the honoured servant of his father's commercial house, should resist him. How shocked would be his pride, his feelings of integrity! How amazed, how startled, how grieved,

how enraged he would be! Then Arthur reflected what a cipher he himself had been in that establishment, where his father had caused him to be treated more like a disreputable poor relation than an only son and heir. The consciousness of newly acquired power was all damped by his father's desperate state. For, after all, Arthur dearly loved, though he feared, the old man. He began next to think what he should do if Manvers resisted the authority with which he was armed. The naturally indignant confidential clerk and cashier might even dispute the authenticity of the document he held. "I should not like to lay hands on him," thought Arthur to himself. We must do him the justice to say, that this reflection did not in the least arise from the consciousness that Manvers was not only a remarkably powerful man, but a bruiser of considerable pretensions. Like some very respectable, steady men, Manvers affected to know, or did know, every notability in "fast" life, male or female, about town. He was posted in the history of all, for the last half-century or more, from Ginger Stubbs and Madame Vestris to Sambo Sutton and Mrs. (not Lady) Hamilton. According to his own account, he had, when a very young man, a night-house encounter with Deaf Burke, and had knocked the "deaf un" out of time in a very few minutes. It is astonishing what respectable men will volunteer in the way of confession sometimes, as to their deeds and misdeeds of twenty or twenty-five years ago, in their hot youth. It is true that the credibility of this achievement only rested upon the assertion of Manvers himself; but it made a wonderful impression

upon the youthful imagination of Arthur. This, however, rather excited his combative propensities than otherwise. Had he not held his own in a glove-fight with Hammer Lane, concerning which there was no possible fiction, but a good deal of hard-hitting reality? Had he not, only a few days before, challenged a whole array of draymen and brewers to fight a fist-duel, because he had been bespattered with grains from the establishment, as he passed by while the carts were loading? Unable to see the individual who had indulged in this not very agreeable practical joke at his expense, Arthur had rung the counting-house bell of that eminent firm, the Messrs. Maltby and Hopkins, and having stated what had befallen him, requested that all the gang might be summoned together that he might detect the offender. Then, in spite of the enormous proportions of a son of Anak among them, nearly six feet and a half high, he abused them roundly, and dared the fellow who had thrown the grains over him to come out and meet him like a man. Finding that no one responded, he called them a set of dastardly fellows, and made them heartily ashamed of the trick that had been played by one or more of their fellows.

"Supposing," shouted Arthur, "that you had spoiled the best suit of clothes of some artist, or mechanic; some poor teacher obliged to dress well, going his daily rounds, would you have been pleased by that, you pitiful sneaks? Come, I'll give the man who did it a sovereign to stand out and face me. What, you dare not! I am ashamed of such a lot of un-English rascals."

The men actually cheered him as he left the place, and I fancy they never again saluted a passer-by with a shower of hot grains. So it must not be supposed that Arthur would have shrunk from an encounter with Manvers, because of the heavy weight and reputed prowess of that gentleman, had he not known him so intimately and respected him so long. But he felt that the very idea of a personal contest with Manvers was distasteful. It was like contemplating sacrilege. He would about as much have relished a solemn obligation to trip up a bishop in St. James's-street, or to give the Lord Chancellor his quietus with the mace on the occasion of that high functionary coming out of the House of Lords, with no more consideration for his person than a policeman has for the skull of a British costermonger, or the limbs of an "unfortunate" female who has omitted to pay him for an unwritten license to follow her sad vocation in the streets.

"There's no help for it, and it must be done," was Arthur's conclusion, as he entered the broad gates of Bingley's Wharf about eleven A.M.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW A PAINFUL DUTY DEVOLVED ON ARTHUR
AUBREY.

Mistrust white-headed clerks! They can be hired ready dressed by the month, or the week, or the day. The modern British clerk is a reflex of the modern British merchant. As a commercial and financial rule, mistrust all outward respectability of appearance, all that looks solid and rich; as you would magnificent offices, gorgeous furniture, and a board-table big enough to hold Sir John Dean Paul's religious library and the securities of —— and —— themselves. These are the shallowest devices of the dishonest promoter, the scamp director, and the general limited-liability humbug in all his phases.—*Notes on the Nineteenth Century. By a Ruined Shareholder.*

MR. JOHN SWINDLES MANVERS was a portly personage, with an excellent judgment in steel pens, and of considerable sapiency in various small matters of London life. He generally wore a black frock-coat and trousers, and a double-breasted white waistcoat of dazzling cleanliness. His complexion was somewhat pale—it might have been called pasty—his glossy hair, and, for that period, rather exuberant whiskers, were nearly black; his teeth were regular and shining; and his grey eyes were by no means forbidding in their expression. Any jury would have been impressed most favourably by his appearance. Altogether, he was what is called a fine man, and in these days would have presented the beau idéal.

either of the promoter of a limited liability company, or of a touting shopman in St. Paul's Churchyard, with a liberal salary for his good looks and seductive and imposing manners. His age might have been thirty-six or thirty-eight. He prided himself greatly on his penmanship, and never made, or at least left, a blot in his books. Sometimes he might be seen obliterating some such things with exquisite pains; on which occasion his right-hand full shirt-cuff would be turned up, as he wielded with a sort of counting-house grace the white-handled office penknife, which, with a square and solid piece of india-rubber, was always somewhat ostentatiously displayed on his desk.

"Good morning, sir," he said to Arthur, laying down the "Times" as the latter entered; "how is the governor this morning? I trust his health is improved."

The tone and manner of Mr. Manvers in making this natural inquiry were indescribably bland and considerate. They resembled those of the head of a mourning warehouse in the West-end. Mr. Pettingall, the second clerk, looked up sadly, and the rest eagerly awaited the reply. Arthur shook his own head and Mr. Manvers's hand simultaneously, and a tear gathered in his eye.

"Will you step into your father's room, sir?" said Mr. Manvers, persuasively.

It was the touting shopman's, not the limited liability promoter's style of address on this occasion.

"Yes, Mr. Manvers," replied Arthur; "I have something to say to you. I wish to see you alone."

"Is it all over, sir?" said Manvers, when they had entered, in a rapid and excited manner, and with an anxious gleam in his eyes that might have seemed strange to a prejudiced observer.

"Oh, no, Mr. Manvers," responded Arthur, "my poor father is not so well; but I hope he has yet many years in store."

Mr. Manvers shook his head in turn.

"I fear, sir," he said, "that he will never recover. Your father, sir, will never enter this room again."

"Nay, nay," said Arthur, "why do you think that?"

"He has been failing rapidly of late," answered the clerk; "it is only a question of days. You are aware, sir, of the position I hold; your father's confidence is largely—I may say entirely—reposed in me. I need not say that when the deplorable event happens, you may depend upon everything being done that may tend to soften the calamity to you. You look sadly distressed—indeed, ill, Mr. Arthur—you must take great care of yourself; health is the first blessing, sir, and if, by-and-bye, you should think fit to take a few weeks' run on the Continent, there is nothing to prevent it, sir, nothing. I believe that everything belonging to your respected father is in my safe keeping. Ah, sir, how often have I wished that the governor had listened to me, and brought you up to this fine business. It is a pity, a great pity, but your interests will be carefully administered, as you must be aware."

"Mr. Manvers," said Arthur, "you are, I trust, forming conclusions far too rapidly. My father's

case is not so hopeless as you seem to think. This very morning he has acted with unwonted vigour, considering how prostrate he has been, and he has sent me here charged with a peremptory mandate and a solemn duty."

"Indeed, sir," said Manvers; "and pray what may that be?"

"You know, Mr. Manvers," said Arthur, "my father's peculiar views and conduct towards myself; and you will be glad, I am sure, to learn that he has within these last few days entirely reinstated me in his affections and his confidence. He thinks now that I have not yet sufficiently represented him, and he desires to make a complete alteration in that respect."

"Well, sir," observed Mr. Manvers, "nothing can be more proper. I can tell you, that it is entirely owing to my representations to him; I have always begged him—I may say implored him—to treat you differently; to make every allowance for a young man of gentlemanly style and habits like yourself. 'You ought to treat Mr. Arthur more like a man, sir,' I was constantly saying to him; 'considering, too, the fortune he is to inherit.' I am delighted to hear it, sir." And he rubbed his hands. "What may be the amount?" he continued; "it will give me great pleasure, very great pleasure, to cash the cheque."

"Nothing of the kind," said Arthur, dryly; "it is not a cheque which I hold here," observing, as he spoke, that Manvers looked inquiringly at the paper which he held nervously crumpled in his hand.

"Oh," said Manvers, "I thought that the governor had come out strong at last. Well," he added, coarsely, "you can afford to wait now without much difficulty. It won't be for long, depend upon it, Mr. Arthur. You won't see your father here again, sir. It was only this morning that I was talking to his barber, Jenkins, about him ; and he agreed with me that there was no mistaking the symptoms this time."

Arthur felt extremely shocked and disgusted, both by the tone and matter of these remarks.

"I trust, Mr. Manvers," he rejoined, after a pause, "that both you and Mr. Jenkins are mistaken. But to come to the object of my errand. You know that I have been much with my father lately ; constantly backwards and forwards to Dulwich from the Temple."

Manvers nodded acquiescence. For a moment Arthur paused to collect himself, and this gave the clerk the opportunity to say :

"Yes, sir, very expensive, I dare say, and you have not had your money for the last six weeks. Ahem ! under the circumstances, I shall have no hesitation to advance anything in reason. Fifty or a hundred pounds are at your immediate disposal." And he made a motion to leave the room.

All this had grated inexpressibly upon Arthur's feelings ; and although he saw in it but a vulgar and time-serving anxiety to stand well with the heir of one whom Manvers evidently thought as good as dead, it gave him courage to proceed with far less compunction than he would otherwise have felt.

“Do me the favour,” he said, “Mr. Manvers, to sit down. I have a very painful duty to perform. It is my father’s wish, or rather order, that you should at once give me possession of everything belonging to him, and leave at least for a time—take a holiday, as it were, in order that—that—my control may be unquestioned, I suppose, and—and things be put straight.”

“What !” shouted Manvers, leaping to his feet, “what did you say ? Your father is raving, sir, mad, delirious—and you, you don’t mean seriously, you are joking—ha ! ha ! capital !”

“It is not exactly the time or occasion I should select for jesting,” replied Arthur, coldly.

“Excuse me, sir,” said Manvers ; “but this is too good. I can understand your poor father being no longer in possession of his faculties ; but I should have thought that you, sir, would scarcely have brought such a message seriously.”

“My father,” said Arthur, “is in the perfect possession of all his faculties. See here his handwriting, as firm and strong as ever.” And he held the mandate for Manvers to peruse, who glared at the document as if he would have consumed it. “I have, in obedience to this paper, to request your immediate withdrawal, and that you will surrender everything into my hands as my father’s representative.”

“And do you suppose, sir, that I shall suffer you, in obedience to the whim of insanity, to discharge me, like an errand boy, at a minute’s notice ? Do you know what and who I am, and what character I bear ? Do you think I will suffer my character in the City

to be ruined thus by you, sir, or your father, because he has taken an over-dose of morphia, or because his brain is affected by the near approach of death? No, sir, I shall not do it. I am not such a fool. Is this the way my honest services and hard work of twelve years are to be rewarded? No, sir, John Manvers is too good a man for that—his name is known and respected in the City, sir. I have done my duty to your father, sir.” And he struck his breast just over the silver hunting-watch in the left pocket of the white Marsella vest, whose snowy hue seemed to attest his integrity. “And by G—d, sir, your father shall do his duty to me!”

“Then,” said Arthur, “you refuse to go?”

“Refuse! Young gentleman, are you in your senses to think that I shall be guilty of such folly? I trust John Manvers knows his duty to his employer a little better than that.”

“Then,” said Arthur, firmly, “I shall be compelled, much against my will, to enforce my father’s commands.”

“And if,” cried Manvers, in a transport of fury, “I choose not to go, what then? Your father left me his executor, and I shall discharge the trust. What do you know of his affairs? Nothing! There is not a man in this place who will not obey me, rather than you. Take care what you are about, young man, before you assail my character. Come, come; let us understand each other and be friends. It is evident that your poor father is nearer to his end than even I thought.”

“Hark ye, Mr. Manvers!” returned Arthur, loudly

and fiercely; "I am no child to be bullied by an insolent and, perhaps, dishonest clerk."

Manvers turned pale, and made as if he would strike him.

"Try and eject me from these premises, if you dare," he cried; "you'll soon find yourself mistaken."

"Silence, sir!" returned Arthur, calmly. "Silence! I say. If you attempt any villany—yes, villany is the word—I shall call in the police. I will have you up before a magistrate within an hour, and where will your boasted character be then? It is you that must be insane to talk thus. I tell you that I begin to suspect your honesty, and to think that you have really robbed my father, as he says."

As Arthur uttered the last words, Manvers made a rush towards him; but sank half-way, as if completely abashed and cowed, into a chair, and, covering his face with his hands, burst into an agony of tears.

For a few moments, Arthur gazed at him with wonder; and then his heart softened as he beheld the distress of the man whom he had so long been taught to respect and revere for his sterling qualities and commercial rectitude. He had never before seen a strong man of mature age give way in such a manner, and sob and cry like a child.

"Come, come!" said he, approaching Manvers, and placing his hand kindly on his shoulder, "I dare say it is very hard to bear. I can assure you this mission has caused me the deepest pain. But it can't be helped, you know; and if you will be guided by me, you will make the best of it. I have thought

all along, that it is only a suspicious fancy my father has got into his head. Leave quietly—say you are very much indisposed. I will do everything to avert a thought of evil. I pledge myself, in case all is right, as I am sure it is, not only to pay you the bequest under my father's will, but to make a handsome addition to it. Come, my father is waiting for me. Take your hat; say you are going somewhere in a natural tone, and do not return to-day—that is all. Write a letter to Mr. Pettingall, stating that you have a headache, a cold—anything. Come, come, Mr. Manvers, be a man."

Manvers looked up fiercely at him.

"You do not understand this, young gentleman," he said—"how should you? You do not know the feelings of a man of business, the delicacy of a City reputation. I have served your father well and faithfully" (his voice faltered) "for twelve years, and this is my reward. I tell you it cannot be concealed. Every one will know it—will point at me, and say, 'There goes Manvers, the suspected clerk, who was turned off by a youth, his employer's son, at a moment's notice.' I cannot bear it—I will not. It will kill me. Let me entreat you, sir, to reflect; to think what you are doing. Do not commit this injustice. Your father will be the first to repent it, and to blame you. Tell him some plausible story, such as you would have me tell. Say you have executed his wishes. If he recovers, he will thank you; and if not, you will be spared an injustice which you would bitterly regret."

"I have never told my father a lie in my life,"

said Arthur ; “even when I risked all in telling him the truth. Would you have me commence on his death-bed ? I think you take an overstrained and unnecessarily strong view of this matter. You can absent yourself for a week without suspicion. I dare say by that time my father will be satisfied. After all, there is nothing so strange and monstrous in his wish to place everything in his son’s hands.”

“There is more than that. Some villain has been at work with my name, and tampered with your father’s suspicious character.”

“Nay, sir,” responded Arthur, “I don’t think he has been so suspicious ; at any rate, with regard to you. It appears to me, that for years past he has confided too much—ay, you may start, I repeat, too much—for any man to confide to another, alien in blood and family ties. And now, like many men who have been over-confiding, he has rushed into the opposite extreme. All that I can say is, that I did everything in my power to persuade him not to adopt this proceeding ; but in vain, and I have now no alternative. Will you oblige me, therefore, by delivering up all keys, books, and papers in your custody ; in short, all the property you hold of his in your possession ?”

“Will you tell me the reason of this ?” said Manvers. “Of what does your father complain ?”

Arthur hesitated. At length, however, he said :

“I believe, Mr. Manvers, that you made certain statements about some property—an inheritance, in short, which did not correspond with the impression which my father had received.”

"Fool! fool! that I was," cried Manvers. "And is this all? I can explain everything in an instant. If you will wait a quarter of an hour, I will write him the fullest explanation. It was a little vanity. I did not like—in short, I told him that it was my money, when it was that of a cousin, who has just returned from the Mauritius. If you will kindly take my written explanation to him, I can never be sufficiently grateful. I will dedicate my life to your service. It will save me from disgrace."

"If these great commercial swells," thought Arthur—"these men whose probity is such a cherished valuable, that they speak of it, as if no one out of their sphere had any honesty at all—if these men of figures and calculation will tell unnecessary fibs, why they must put up with the consequences. I cannot do anything of the kind," he said, aloud. "Come, come, Mr. Manvers, let us end this unpleasant discussion. I call upon you to assist me in carrying out my father's wishes. Remember all you have said to me about business-like promptness, obedience to orders," he said, cheerfully. "After all, there is nothing so dreadful in this ordeal. A little holiday, nothing else. You ought to be glad of it."

Manvers raised his face.

"You don't know what you are doing, young man," he said. "Arthur Aubrey, if I go away from here a disgraced man to-day, I shall put a pistol to my head when I get home, and blow out my brains."

"Nay, nay, Mr. Manvers," said Arthur, in a tone of surprise; but with less commiseration than might have been expected from him; "this is folly, indeed."

"My blood be on your head!" cried Manvers. "I cannot, and will not, endure this disgrace in the City."

"Nonsense!" said Arthur. "You will think better of it. Compose yourself, and give me the keys."

"In a few moments, sir," replied the other; "since it must be so." He then requested Arthur to wait, whilst he plunged his face into cold water. "I presume you will have no objection to my removing my own effects—the contents of my own drawers?"

"Not a paper—not a thing," said Arthur. "Such are my orders, and I will abide by them to the letter. Besides, how would it look to the clerks? You will spoil everything, as I had planned it."

Manvers appeared resigned; he gave up his keys, and, walking into the clerks' outer room, he huskily wished Arthur good morning, and abruptly retired.

"Mr. Manvers is not very well," observed Arthur to Mr. Pettingall. "I have advised him to go home and recruit himself."

"He has been working very hard indeed, sir, lately," said Mr. Pettingall. "Look at those figures!" he said, pointing to sheets upon sheets covered with minute calculations. "And then, sir, your poor father's illness weighs upon his spirits; as, indeed, it affects us all deeply."

And Pettingall hastily brushed his coat-sleeve across his eyes, and turned away to clear his throat.

"Good fellow! honest, attached creature!" thought Arthur to himself. "But I own I can't make Manvers out. Shoot himself, indeed! Good God!

if he were to do so. But he never can be such a fool. How very susceptible these City men are; how they count all the small change of life, both in paying and receiving. Well, making every allowance for him, Mr. Manvers is not quite the man I took him for."

"Mr. Manvers has not taken the key of his drawer," suddenly observed Pettingall. "I never knew him do such a thing before. I think I had better lock the drawer and send him the key immediately."

"Nay," said Arthur; "give it to me. Mr. Manvers has no secrets from me."

Mr. Pettingall looked amazed, and seemed to hesitate.

"I think," he said, "Mr. Manvers would hardly like——"

"Gentlemen," said Arthur, "I may as well say to you that I stand here, by my father's desire, in his place, and that every one here will obey me as they would do him. I have his authority here. I have just shown it to Mr. Manvers. As I presume there would be no hesitation in handing that key to my father, if he requested it during the absence of Mr. Manvers, I think I may as well retain it."

"Certainly, sir, certainly. I am very glad. I make bold to congratulate you, sir, on assuming your proper place. Not," added Mr. Pettingall, "that this is a time and season for congratulation."

And he again showed signs of deep emotion. Mr. Pettingall had only been there for seven years; but he was much esteemed in the office. He was a young, short, stoutish, dark man, of very ordinary appear-

ance, quite dissimilar from the imposing Manvers. Arthur mentally resolved to esteem Pettingall highly and place great reliance on him, in consequence of his evident attachment to the head of the house.

"There is something in this City view of things after all," he thought. "Poor Manvers! It is enough to distress him, such a sudden upset. I must make it up handsomely hereafter, if the worst should happen, and my poor father's end indeed be near."

"Will Mr. Manvers return this afternoon, sir?" inquired Pettingall.

"Hem! Yes, no—really I can't say," replied Arthur. "He is very unwell, and I told him to take a little repose. At any rate, I shall be here in the morning with a gentleman, who will go through the books just as a matter of form. Kind of satisfaction—to you all."

Pettingall and the clerks looked at each other, but said nothing for a minute or so, during which Arthur read, or seemed to read, the "Times," which Mr. Manvers had left on his desk. At last he said, in an indifferent tone:

"Where are all the books—I mean cash-books and ledgers of the firm?"

"Everything is in Mr. Manvers's custody, except what is in actual use," was the reply.

"Ah! very good," said Arthur. "I shall be here to-morrow early. Good-bye."

And he shook hands with Pettingall, and went out.

A youthful clerk had left the office during the conversation above recorded; and the news had spread

all round the wharf that Mr. Arthur Aubrey had been nominated to the command of Bingley's Wharf, *vice* Manvers, who retired. When, therefore, Arthur issued forth, at least a dozen wharfingers were in sight in the yard. The foreman came up and said to Arthur, touching his cap:

"Do you want the carriage, sir?"

"Thank you," said Arthur, "I'll walk to it, if you please."

"Allow me, sir," said the foreman.

And whipping Arthur's great-coat off his arm, he shambled rapidly down the yard to call the carriage up. The rest of the men touched their hats.

"Poor fellows!" thought Arthur, who had never received such attention there before; "they all feel deeply for my father's illness, and are anxious to show it in their rude, honest way. It is very creditable to them. Who says that human nature is unkind and selfish, after all?"

And he went on his way with a heart, though sad, warmed by these kindly sympathies on the part of these humble fellows.

"I say, mate," quoth Jem to Bill, *his* senior lieutenant, "don't you wish you was him? Won't he make the shiners fly? Ain't he ready to jump out of his shoes? I should think the old un couldn't die quick enough like for un, eh?"

"It's a poor heart that never rejoices," returned the other, with a grin. "If your governor had kep you as short as hisn did he, I thinks as how you'd like to hurry the hundertaker a little; and if yer didn't hown to it, I should say yer was a hout-and-

hout liar, I should! I say, wot's come over old Manvers? I see him go out looking like a choked pig."

And the pair adjourned to the neighbouring public-house, the Badger and Bootjack, to exchange further comments on the probable change of ministry that was looming in their commercial horizon.

Mr. Pettingall said nothing to his subordinates and repressed the inquiries as to the health of Mr. Manvers, which were rather pointedly put to him. That afternoon, he assumed an air of reticent dignity previously unknown to him. As he sat on his high stool in a meditative mood, he surveyed his more humble confrères in a similar abstracted, superior, mild, and rather grand manner to that with which a Life Guardsman on sentry duty at the Horse Guards is wont to contemplate a butcher's boy patting and stroking his horse's neck or nose. It was evident that Mr. Pettingall was revolving vast contingencies in his mind.

Arthur hastened home, and found his father waiting his arrival with the fretful impatience of a sick man. He exhibited great satisfaction at the result, and immediately turned round and fell into a calm slumber. A few days afterwards he died, after telling his son that he felt at peace with all men, and confident of mercy. According to the creed of some this was highly incorrect; seeing that although he had conformed all his life to the forms of the Established Church, he was in reality, as he told his son, Unitarian in belief.

"I feel," he said to Arthur, "like a traveller about to set forth on a long journey. You will follow me

after an interval, and we shall see each other again."

These were nearly his last words, before leaving the world in a much happier frame of mind for thinking that he had disposed of Mr. Manvers. Whatever may be said to the contrary, it is certain that the affairs of this world occupy the mind in the majority of cases with greater force and intensity immediately previous to dissolution than at any other time. Men seldom feel so anxious about mundane matters, as they do just before they are about to relinquish them for ever. Many even make preparations for themselves, as if they wanted a new abode, new furniture, and new clothes. We once knew a very shabby fellow seized with cholera, who had a perfect craving for a new hat, scarf, boots, &c., a couple of days before his death. We remember, too, a lady who died with the upholsterers actually executing her orders for hanging new pictures, and arranging fresh furniture. She would have everything spick and span, and every detail of domestic comfort thoroughly arranged; and this in a new dwelling, and for no one save herself. How frequently have moribund persons a mania for the purchase of articles utterly useless to them! Mr. Aubrey, however, seemed chiefly anxious on account of his son; and he who had carefully withheld all knowledge of his affairs from him during his life, became painfully solicitous to give him the most complete information, as the shadows of death began to darken every sense.

The first thing that aroused Arthur from the deep despondency of grief was a note from the accountant,

in whose hands he had placed the books of his father's establishment. The note merely stated the fact that after a prolonged research he had found a singular erasure in an entry of the sum of thirty-five pounds, and on referring to another book had discovered that the sum was there entered as sixty-five pounds. This was no less than five years before the then date. Doubtless Mr. Manvers, in whose handwriting these entries were, could explain this, he said. He, the accountant, recommended that Arthur should request an immediate interview with Mr. Manvers on the subject. Arthur accordingly wrote. The same evening came a letter which filled Arthur with astonishment, disgust, and grief. It was an abject confession from the confidential clerk, the model cashier, the honoured City institution, whom banks would have trusted—had trusted with thousands. Manvers stated his follies, and temptations; his first fall, on the occasion of this very erasure; the misery he had undergone ever since, and his fearful remorse. Would the son of his late honoured master, noble and generous as he was, so far pity and forgive him, as to allow him to proceed to a foreign land, and there either retrieve an honest name, or seek a distant grave?—Arthur was sick at heart; an early belief was crushed, and the object of his veneration was not only degraded, but had assumed the character of a snivelling felon! No, he could not prosecute him, he could not place that familiar face and that spotless white vest in the dock. Let the villain go and expiate his crime, as he had said. So he wrote to Manvers, and told him,

that if he would at once leave England, and pledge himself never to return, he would not punish him for his crime. We need hardly say that the pledge was very eagerly given. Manvers wrote a penitent letter from Liverpool; but he did not sail—at all events, then. What he delayed his journey for, we shall shortly see.

He went for a short time to the Channel Islands, where he indulged in deep-sea fishing, as if he had been an innocent man; and slaughtered scores of harmless gulls, puffins, sea-swallows, and oyster-catchers, like a brute as he was. Thence, when Arthur Aubrey was safely out of the way, he stole back to London, and executed a little commission for himself, as well as a purpose which we shall see developed very shortly. Mr. Manvers knew no scruples, so soon as his City reputation was gone. He was always a profligate at heart. The extravagance of a woman had first led him to commit an “error” in his employer’s books; but had he escaped this temptation, he had in him the makings of a most respectable personage of the modern City type. What a loss he is to the commercial world in the present financial era! What a part he might have played in the great Overreach and Gurnet swim! What an official liquidator was lost in him! In America, the finer part of his capacity was in great measure wasted. His persuasiveness, his grand demeanour, the respectable side of him went for little or nothing. But the fact is, from the moment when he lost his position in the City, Manvers degenerated into a mere vulgar

ruffian. He was too dissipated and demoralised to go in for hypocrisy a second time.

Strip your alderman, who now persecutes poverty from the bench as a crime, of his civic robes, his banker's book, and his false assumption of a virtue—Spartan only towards others, Epicurean for himself—and what shall he be? Poorer in virtue than the lowest he has condemned. Circumstance bribes the rogue to be honest, and drives the honest man to transgress the law. The successful swindler is lauded for his ostentatious benevolence, whom the canonisation of Ser Cappelletto* would have as suitably befitted. If modern life is so great and complex a lie, what must future history be ! We do not say that there is no good in the world—far from it—perhaps there is as much as ever ; but it is wonderfully mixed up and confused, and is generally on the losing side in the battle of life.

* See Boccaccio, Novel I.

CHAPTER X.

MR. PETTINGALL IN THE THUMBIKINS.

A grey-haired, unconvicted felon, who lived to prosecute a dishonest clerk of his own in the fiercest spirit of revenge. He gave up lending money on bills—so often as he did not like the security; and brought up his children in the love of Mammon, the fear of discovery, and the morality of trade. He was very much shocked at the inability of his eldest born to keep straight in the broad path of propriety. And truly had the father been a different man, and had he taught his son a nobler lesson, he might have had some reason to complain of his cruel lot. As it was, the prodigal returned one night clothed in mock repentance and real scurvy, and with his hair cropped strangely short. The father assigned to him a top room in the house; and though he did not kill the fatted calf—possibly because veal was not then in season—he gave him food and medicines, an odd volume of sermons, a pot of balm of Columbia, and a suit of his brother's clothes. So devoted to punctuality did the young man become, that, so soon as he was restored to health, he carried off all the watches of the family, together with the silver spoons, and even his mother's trinkets, as a filial remembrance of his early youth. All this the father told with tears and lamentations to a customer whom he had just plundered, by means of false samples, of five hundred pounds. "It is hard, sir," he said, "very hard, is it not? when he might have stayed here and done so well."—*Sketches of Character. By A. Scacciato, Esq., vol. i., p. 19.*

MR. PETTINGALL sat in state in the little parlour, which once he was wont to enter with his heart in his shoes and his pen behind his ear, in obedience to the summons either by bell or voice of the late Mr. Aubrey, his inflexible employer. The furniture was unchanged. There was the same crimson flock paper, the same dingy red curtains, the same old office table,

the same two iron safes—a small one placed over a large one—and the same tall, antiquated, stained-wood escritoire, with its drawers and brass handles below, and its dark pigeon-holes above. Thence the old gentleman was wont to produce his bottle of sherry and biscuit, or his medicine phial, just as it happened, Thence had Arthur had many a single glass of wine, when he called on the “governor.” No one in that office would have thought of declining the offer of one glass of wine, or of expecting two, from the old merchant. Mr. Pettingall was deeply reflective. Before him stood a decanter of port, as if to moistify his meditations; and a dish of filberts, as if occasionally to afford a light distraction. A gloomy picture or two had been added to the walls; for be it known, Mr. Pettingall, in a very small way, was an art-collector and purchaser. His essays in this way had hitherto been chiefly confined to the purlieus of the New Cut, and the neighbourhoods of the Westminster-road and Hoxton. He had scarcely as yet pursued the Shades of Rembrandt and Murillo into the more western region of Wardour-street. Mr. Pettingall seemed ill at ease. He looked at his watch, and uttered something like a curse. His ill-looking countenance wore its most sinister expression, crossed with occasional gleams of mistrust, fear, and doubt. He stepped up to the old escritoire and took forth a box of choice cigars. He lit one and puffed it impatiently. He then rose and paced the room. The weather was cold, but what was it that shone on his dingy brow? Unquestionably it was a drop of perspiration. He wiped it away, and listened intensely.

Suddenly—yes, no, yes—there was a ring at the bell. A heavy step was heard in the passage, and the door was opened by a tall, big man in a great-coat buttoned up to his ears, and with a seafaring cap drawn over his brows. The old woman who had followed him to announce his arrival was dismissed with the intimation she would no longer be required; and the stranger, locking the door and proceeding to divest himself of a pair of spectacles, a false moustache, and the aforesaid cap and great-coat, displayed the identical features of the magnificent Manvers.

“Hem!” he said, “devilish snug, by Jingo! and how goes on my virtuous successor?”

“Glad to see you,” said Pettingall; “hope you’re well.” If ever a lie were manifest by its very utterance, this was.

“None of your humbug,” said Manvers, flinging himself down; “never mind about my health—have you considered what I asked you in my letter, and are you going to do it, that’s all?” And he helped himself to a glass of wine, which he drank, and then to another.

“Governor’s port?” he observed; “know it well—sly dog, Pettingall—got the key of the cellar—got everything as I left it—bin, No. 50, 1820 vintage.”

“It is some that Mr. Arthur left out for me,” said Pettingall.

“Devilish kind of him!” growled Manvers. “More than I’d do. Do you know what I like about you? It’s your dashed innocence, you mealy-mouthed beauty. And you think I’m going to stand all this—do you?” he roared.

Pettingall's face turned dingy white, a sort of parchment hue. "What do you want with me?" he said. "Can't you let an old friend alone? It's not safe for you to be here, you know."

"Isn't it?" replied Manvers. "And suppose I make it unsafe for you too, my fine fellow? Now, look here, Mr. Pettingall, confidential executor, and gentleman by courtesy. Let us understand each other at once. In the first place, am I to have those cases or not?"

"How can I do it?" said Pettingall. "What excuse can I make? It is as much as my position is worth."

"Your position? *My* position!" replied Manvers. "Confound your impudence. Do you think I am going to stand this humbug? Say what you like about it. I leave your excuse to your brilliant talent. Ha! ha! *your* talent! If you can't deceive him, curse him! you are a fool!" And Mr. Manvers forthwith lighted a cigar, and puffed away with the utmost satisfaction.

"I will let you have the cases," said Pettingall, slowly, "if you will promise not to come here again and—and risk your liberty in this desperate manner."

"Thoughtful beggar!" Mr. Manvers was pleased to observe.

"And I will let you have the salary that was due and fifty pounds besides, if you will accept it," said Pettingall; "though I sell some of my pictures to make up the sum. I shall risk everything by doing so," he added; "but I can't see an old friend and

associate about to sail for America in the want of a few pounds."

"And suppose I don't choose to go to America? But come. Have you my desk safe?"

Pettingall nodded an eager acquiescence.

"And unopened?" said the other.

"Unopened," was the reply.

"What a dashed fool!" was the gracious remark of Mr. Manvers; but as he did not specify whom he meant, the exclamation did not so much matter.

"Where is it?" he added.

"In my room," replied Pettingall.

"Bring it here!" said the ex-clerk.

Mr. Pettingall rose and left the room. During his absence Mr. Manvers employed himself with a rapid scrutiny of the contents of the escritoire, and took a peep at a large and dingy banker's book. Pettingall returned and put down on the table a small plain desk, to which Manvers eagerly fitted a key. He took out a document in a sealed envelope and turned it over.

"This will do," he said. "Now then listen to me. Are you on the square, since the old boy died?"

Pettingall hesitated, as if he did not comprehend.

"Come! come!" said his tormentor. "This won't do with me. Do you think I don't know why you have kept that desk and those cases for me, as I ordered you; yes, ordered! I will stand none of your cursed nonsense. Why what next? Don't I know that you once indulged in a little mild speculation yourself, you cowardly humbug? Don't I know about Judas Levy and the little bills? Don't I remember

a certain day when I caught your honesty tripping? Now, it remains with me to expose you, or not; and by ——! it shall suit my convenience and my interest.”

“Manvers,” said Pettingall, with livid features and trembling limbs, “you know that I long since replaced the few pounds, that I only—only anticipated, to save myself and my wife from ruin. Since then, I swear, that with the exception of giving you up these cases and that desk, which, after all, are your own, I have never wronged my employer of a penny. I—I—don’t want to be dishonest. I want to gain an independent position by the means which are now in my power. I will be your friend, I swear, if you will let me. But don’t ask me to—to rob Mr. Arthur——”

“Stuff! Bosh!” responded Manvers. “I know your little game; you are too great a coward to put yourself in the grasp of the law, that is all. You want to grow fat on commission jobs and percentages—do you? You want to sell the business to a Company, and grab the appointment of manager—you see, I know all. Look here, you twopenny-farthing rogue! how came you by this wine? Now, listen, I’ll have five hundred pounds within a fortnight. Don’t interrupt me with a parcel of lies. I have looked in that book there, and I know what you have at your command. Don’t tell me you can’t. I’ll teach you how, and safely, too—safe as a church—safe as the Bank, ha! ha! Besides, you fool! you are only anticipating what it must come to. You can’t finger all that money, without some of it sticking

to your fingers—not in dust—but nuggets! Eh? Choose at once. If you don't follow my instructions, I'll expose you—I will, by ——! I'll write to that conceited young sprig, though I hate him like poison, and put him on his guard. Aha! who knows but that he will condone my mistakes in return for the friendly warning? Take your choice, and quickly. Friend or foe with Swindles Manvers. At any rate I know enough to ruin you. Pledge yourself to follow my instructions; and I will leave this rotten old country within a month, and for years, if not for ever. As for him, I carry my revenge here;" and he tapped the desk. "Some day I may make terms with him, but not now. He will run through his fortune fast enough, without your assistance or mine. And then we shall see. Take your choice. You have safe cards to play. His lawyers are ready to join in to-morrow. They are a precious couple, I can tell you, and no mistake. I knew old Grinderby when he visited his clients in the Bench, and concocted many a rum plant with Sam Stevens and Will Clark. Now, which is it? Come, man, I am your best friend after all. You don't want to be Lord Mayor of London all in a hurry in these precious days, without a little jolly swindling, do you? I say, you couldn't spare a fellow a dozen or two of this exemplary tippie to drink luck to his pal on the voyage to America, could you? I'll just leave the address. Don't send too much—say a couple of dozen, and ditto of the very dry sherry. I'll leave you the address, my boy."

Pettingall sat rocking to and fro on his chair in something very nearly approaching agony. His

spirit had collapsed as if with a species of mental Asiatic cholera. Well did he know the desperate character of the man before him, the man who had quailed before Arthur's virtuous indignation, and yielded tamely to right; but who cowed and utterly terrified his mean nature and guilty conscience. Pettingall had always entertained a sort of instinctive fear of Manvers, increased and strengthened by the daily contact into which he was brought with him in the exercise of his subordinate vocations. He remembered too well the affair of which Manvers had so unceremoniously reminded him; and although he had so far atoned for the offence as to replace the trifle he had made use of, he knew the full demerit of its commercial bearings, which would doubtless be done ample justice to by his unscrupulous adversary, should he ever denounce him. It was true that Pettingall had marked for himself an "honest," that is, a safe and respectable career. He had hugged the idea of becoming a prosperous and highly respectable member of Society. Why not? The chance was in his grasp. Douceurs and pickings, commissions and bribes, to these he had no repugnance; nay, he had well pondered on the golden harvest which the future would open to him. The insinuation of Manvers, that he designed to sell his employer's interests and the business connexion of the late Mr. Aubrey to a Company, was too well-founded in fact. He had already spread his lines in pleasant places. He had conceived a plan to induce the spendthrift heir to sell Bingley's Wharf, which was not in the entail, for a sum far below its value; and he had con-

cealed from him his knowledge that a railway was about to be constructed, which would come through a portion of the premises, as well as the fact that a most advantageous purchase might be made of some adjoining buildings, which the elder Aubrey had always had a hankering after, and which would nearly double the value of the property. Already he had induced Arthur to let a portion of the wharf at a much reduced rent, but only at a yearly tenancy. But as for actual embezzlement and book erasures—as for bold rascality, the more dangerous game which Manvers had played—Pettingall shrunk from such a career with alarm and dread; he desired to pride himself on his honesty and scrupulous exactitude. Full of the most virtuous intentions in this respect, he actually believed himself to be one of the most worthy, meritorious, and scrupulous men of his class in London. He was conscious of his immense opportunities, and the unprecedented confidence placed in him. He had a considerable sum in book-debts to collect, concerning the details of which his employer was entirely ignorant. He actually despised his patron for such exceeding folly; and it would not have taken much to convince him that he had a right to plunder him of possessions and treasures thus carelessly regarded, and left, as it were, unguarded in the street. How often, too, this feeling occupies a rogue and lures him to the act of plunder—a combination of envy and spite mingled with a sort of ownership grown out of the handling of the coveted wealth, until a species of self-justification almost arises. When, for instance, a lawyer has had the

custody and management of an estate, how soon does he come to regard the owner as a legitimate prey, an excrescence and encumbrance on his own property! How he will undersell, and underlet, and run up costs; to prevent the reinstatement of the improvident heir, or the embarrassed proprietor! And this all in the legitimate line of business; doing, as it were, but justice to himself, in recompense for the trouble he has undergone! In how liberal a spirit he will talk to the tenants, and in how territorial a manner he will glance his eye over improvements, and generally identify himself with the soil! In this lawyer-ridden country, one is often obliged to bestow unlimited confidence in men who have served an apprenticeship to the devil and all his works; and to place deeds in their hands, and to hand over papers and money, without even a receipt; while they trust a client with nothing in return. In this way, a solicitor who has got possession of all his client's deeds, leases, &c., will actually, on reluctantly returning a single unimportant document into his hands, write out a formal acknowledgment that the man's own property is restored to him. The lawyer positively regards the owner of the estate which is managed in his, the lawyer's, office, not only as a victim and legitimate prey, but as an enemy, and an intruder on his own demesne.

To return, however, to Manvers and Pettingall, the big rattlesnake and the smaller reptile. Pettingall heaved a deep sigh. His boasted integrity, his golden, safe career, were threatened—his little empire was overthrown—he was under the fascination of an

evil and a desperate eye, and the wretched little rascal shivered and shook as with an ague. He felt that it was in vain to resist.

"What would you have me do?" at length he asked Manvers in a husky voice. "How can I give you five hundred pounds?"

"Easily enough," replied the other; "five thousand pounds, if I were not the most considerate and easily satisfied fellow in the world. Look you here! you will shortly pocket among the whole lot of swag five hundred pounds that should have been mine by the will. Just hand over the stumpy, and you can easily repay it, if you like to be so green. Have you not thousands of pounds of book-debts passing through your hands? Why should there not be a tolerable percentage of losses on these? He will never go into it."

"No," replied Pettingall; "but some one else may."

"But you need not make such an error as I did," quoth Manvers. "You have my example to profit by."

"By-the-bye," remarked Pettingall, "I expect Mr. Macgregor, the accountant, here this very night at ten o'clock, and it is already half-past nine."

It was Manvers's turn now to change colour. With a tremendous oath, he cursed the officious blackguard, as he called the poor man who had discovered his villany in the simple exercise of his vocation.

"Can't you square him?" he asked Pettingall. "Perhaps he has got a large family. By-the-bye, how many do *you* reckon—three or four is it?"

Pettingall winced. In his vision of an honourable reputation, the future of his boys had largely mixed. He had thought of the free-schools, whose doors would open to his City influence; and for a moment he felt as if he would brave all, and set Manvers at defiance. It was a dangerous observation for the tempter to make. Perhaps the latter saw it; for he immediately added, "What a pity for such a jolly old buck-rabbit as you to run the risk of losing a situation like this, and of being turned out of his hutch without any chance of greens. Well, you are safe from John Manvers, if you will only play fair and stand the mopuses. After all, what risk is there in what I ask you to do? Don't sit shaking there like an idiot, or I'll double the figure. Why, the money will be payable under the will, long before you are even called on to render an account, and you will have fifty opportunities of making it in the mean time besides. I wish I had not been such a flat, that is all. But it was my first shy that did the trick, before my hand got steady—and now you stand in my shoes. I remember, for a whole week after, I was just such a snivelling, trembling wretch as you. I dared not come near the place, much less open the books. That's what did me. Dash it! I actually never put the first little affair straight at all. I have had thousands since, ay, and spent them too. I stood to win ten thousand pounds on the Derby once, and I nearly made a fortune in railways; and now here I am, with perhaps a cool thousand to the good, about to seek my fortune in a land, where it is easier to make money than to keep it, considerable, I calculate. Well, good-

night, my boy, and don't forget the wine—the same as we are now drinking, mind.” And Manvers swallowed a bumper, and deliberately resuming his disguise, quitted the room. The fate of Pettingall was sealed. When Mr. Macgregor came, the worthy clerk was so far beside himself, that anything like business that night became an impossibility. Amongst other things, he pondered over the document to which Manvers, in regaining it, fixed such evident importance, as the means at once of revenge, and putting the screw on Mr. Arthur, as Pettingall was accustomed to call him. What could it be? Then came the sickening thought of the proposed embezzlement; for it was nothing less. That night when Mrs. Pettingall, being greatly disturbed by the uneasy slumbers of her liege lord, laid her hand on his shoulder to awaken him, as she thought, from a paroxysm of nightmare, he leaped up in bed and prayed for mercy in such piteous and appealing tones, that the worthy lady was nearly frightened out of her wits. Yet it was not conscience that afflicted the honest fellow—far from it; but that which in the meanest natures so often supplies its place and is mistaken for it, both by the subject himself and those who witness his tortures—the abject writhings and contortions of a selfish fear. For our own part, we do not believe that deliberate scoundrelism, such as that which plots and poisons, or robs the orphan and the widow, ever *repents*, in the true and proper sense of the word. How can it? A murderer, whom a single act has doomed to wear the brand of Cain, may feel the deepest repentance—seeing that his deed might be

an aberration—whether resulting from passion, revenge, drink, jealousy, or even the temptation of money. But does a dishonest attorney, or a perjured usurper, who has won his way to power by a thousand acts of deliberate villany and atrocity, ever feel thorough conscientious remorse? We think not. The latter may dread the assassin; he may be appalled at the thought of the Deity, to Whom he must account after death. The former may become outwardly religious, and delude himself and the weaker portion of Society by affecting good works. If a sanguinary pirate of twenty years' practice in revolting deeds should incarcerate himself in La Trappe, or found a hospital for incurables, what is it but the moral cowardice of a ruffian physically decayed? Superstitious criminals there are, especially women, who may believe that they can compound for a career of subtle infamy by mere purchase. There is a religion which finds it practically convenient and remunerative to teach this. To a certain extent, such persons may be sincere in deluding themselves—from the coarsest bandit to the most accomplished intrigante. Undoubtedly many who are called very wicked, and who have committed various crimes against the law, may really be struck with a true sense of their misdeeds, and make all the reparation to man and Heaven in their power. But your cool, calculating, selfish, and unscrupulous scoundrel cannot alter his nature. Truly the *Æthiop* may not become white, nor the leopard change his spots. Mr. Pettingall was essentially a dirty little knave, with a great deal of fear in his composition. He was anxious not to incur

the danger of appearing in a criminal dock ; but from the first he designed to betray his master's and patron's interests, so far as he safely could, in the furtherance of his own interests ; while wealth and respectability were the idols which he had set up to worship. Alas, for the uncertainty of human wishes ! The huge form of the desperate, felonious Manvers compelled Pettingall to outstep his inclinations, and commit the vulgar crime of embezzlement, instead of only depreciating his employer's property by underleasing it, and finally causing it to be under-sold, and variously turning the very valuable business connexion of the late Mr. Aubrey to his own profit, instead of that of Mr. Aubrey, junior. To be brief, in a very short time Pettingall was discovered to have received moneys for which he never accounted, and flung himself abjectly on the mercy of Arthur Aubrey. Between Mr. Pettingall and Messrs. Grinderby and Cousens, there had always been the most pleasant business intercourse conceivable. It was, therefore, a sharp and cruel thing on the part of that firm to urge Aubrey in the strongest manner to prosecute Pettingall. On this occasion Mr. Grinderby went almost too far in the severity of his remarks and the strength of his advice.

“ You may do as you please, sir,” he said to Arthur—who, by the way, had gone to his solicitors with the most positive determination to prosecute, and, in fact, to instruct them to get a warrant—“ you may do just as you like, sir, in the matter ; but I conceive that you are bound, in the interests of Society, to punish this fellow. I know you may not like the publicity,

the trouble, and the expense. You may be inclined to allow him to refund a portion of his ill-gotten gains, and to follow into exile his guilty partner and instructor, Manvers, by far the greater villain of the two, sir, in my opinion, whom you have already let loose upon Society, as I understand, in America. I trust, sir, if I may say so, that as a client of this firm you will not on this occasion show such mistaken lenity. Nay, looking at it as a question of morality as well as duty, I shall, indeed, regret, deeply regret, if you take any other course."

As Mr. Aubrey declared himself perfectly firm, and that his mind was fully made up to prosecute a man who had been guilty of such base ingratitude, there did not appear to be such strict necessity or occasion for the strenuous advice and strong representations of Mr. Grinderby. The latter dwelt greatly on the evil example set by Manvers, and suggested that Aubrey himself was not entirely free from blame, for not having prosecuted him, thereby leaving Pettingall exposed to his machinations.

"Example, indeed!" said Aubrey, "I can see no mitigation of his villany in that. Do you mean to say, that my leniency encouraged him to rob me? That only proves him to be a blacker scoundrel."

"You must make allowance for the circumstances by which you yourself surrounded him," quoth the legal Mephistopheles.

These suggestions only irritated Aubrey at the time, but they dwelt and rankled in his mind afterwards. Grinderby's argument was that the example of Manvers and his impunity had corrupted Pettin-

gall, whereas Aubrey insisted upon it that these very things ought to have kept him out of mischief.

Alas! it is circumstance which impels and allures to crime; not example which deters men from it. We remember just after the astounding revelations which resulted from the suicide of the late Mr. Sadleir, whilom a Lord of the Treasury and M.P., being shown a quantity of handwriting and a number of his signatures by an official in the Treasury, who held a very responsible post. He spoke of the suicide's career with a mingled expression of awe and wonder, and especially expressed his amazement that a man in such a position, and with such opportunities, should have lost himself so entirely.

"Who could have thought it of him! Many a time," he said, "he has stood here chatting with me, and I assure you he was the last man in the world I should ever have suspected."

Only a twelvemonth afterwards we called on a matter of business on our friend.

"Is Mr. —— in?" we asked cheerfully of a subordinate.

"No, he is not."

"Will he be in to-day?"

"I don't think it is very likely."

Such were the brief questions and answers; and we went away with an impression on our mind that the under-strapper not only answered us in a rude and abrupt tone, but eyed us in a somewhat peculiar and offensive manner. Great Heaven! the next news we had was that Mr. —— had absconded, and the officers of justice were in pursuit of him. The

last, yes, positively the very last being in the world who we should have thought was likely to commit a folly, much less become capable of a crime. A quiet, self-possessed, amiable, and thoroughly business-like man; a man of law and formulæ, of facts and figures. To be sure, he was the son of a strict and severe clergyman; and extra piety and morality seldom go either with the personalty, the paternal blessing, or the entail. But the surprise and the shock were stupendous. To this day it is incomprehensible, almost inconceivable to our fancy or belief. Yet he had gone; bolted with a paltry sum of Government money; stolen it too in notes easily traced, with a fatuity utterly inexplicable; and was taken soon after landing in America with his trifling plunder, and actually released; so great was the scandal, and so small the amount. He had fled with a vulgar and depraved companion, whom he had married, and who deserted him as soon as he was left without resource. And this female, who drank, and swore, and played him false under his very eyes, had tempted him into vicious expense, and in spite of his capacity, his attainments, and the post which he held, one of substantial advantage and brilliant promise for so young a man, turned him into a common felon, within one year after he had moralised, philosophised; and pondered over Sadleir's colossal frauds and the dreadful lesson of his tragical end; with its memorials before him, and constantly recurring, in the exercise of his daily duties, to his sight.

CHAPTER XI.

A FLEMISH EXTERIOR OF WEBB'S FIELDS, WITH
SOME EULOGY ON LAW AND LAWYERS.

The people asked for a "Code," and their rulers gave them new Law Courts. In order that due consistency might be observed, these were erected on a scale of Satanic grandeur in a poor and densely populated quarter; and the inhabitants had legal, though scarcely equitable, notice of eviction, and were left to make their own arrangements with the workhouse, the prison, and the grave.—*Chronicles of Great Britain*, 1800—1900.

THE advice given to Aubrey by Mr. Grinderby respecting the punishment of Mr. Pettingall, directly operated neither one way nor the other on that gentleman's determination or proceedings. He felt, in truth, greatly outraged and proportionately indignant. Moreover, he had reason to suspect that the loss he had sustained through Pettingall was very serious. For, unlike those of Manvers', his peculations were not merely direct, and applied to his own benefit; but he had robbed him on commission, as it were. He had suppressed and compromised debts; he had underlet and undervalued everything; he had told his employer that debtors were ruined, or on the verge of insolvency, who were able to pay, and obtained from the too easy and credulous-Aubrey (who, be it ad-

mitted, was lazy and hated business withal) receipts in full for the payment of a mere fraction of his just claims; he had sold off the remaining stock for a mere nothing; he was suspected of making away with a considerable amount of property, which could not be traced at all; he had been party to a fraudulent sale of Bingley's Wharf and the adjacent property, under false and lying representations of its declining value, whereas its value had really very much increased; and, lastly, he had sold and transferred the whole business connexion of the late Mr. Aubrey, which his possession of the books and knowledge of the affairs enabled him to do, to the very Limited Liability Company who had bought and taken possession of the premises, and with whom he had secured himself the berth of secretary and managing director on a salary of eight hundred pounds a-year. As, under the old régime, he had only three hundred pounds, which Aubrey had increased to four hundred, with numerous presents and benefactions, it must be owned he had done well for his own benefit, in proportion as he had ruthlessly sacrificed every interest of his patron and benefactor. But he was not content with all this. He actually had the greed and impudence to bring a charge against Aubrey of nearly two thousand pounds as percentage for collecting the debts! It was the resistance of Aubrey to this monstrous attempt at extortion, which first led to the detection of Pettingall's true character and nefarious proceedings.

At first, Messrs. Grinderby and Cousens seemed to adopt the notion, as a matter of course, that Aubrey

must pay this money and satisfy the claim. They "did not see how their client could avoid doing so." Of course, they expressed their great disgust that such a demand should be made; but, legally, they said that Aubrey had not a leg to stand upon. That gentleman, however, called in another accountant, and he went into a second examination of the books. It was not Mr. Macgregor this time; but Mr. Playfair, a gentleman whose acquaintance our hero had accidentally made, and who was a man of singular sagacity, honesty of purpose, and possessed of vast powers of investigation into any matter in which figures were concerned.

Master Pettingall had no chance in such hands. In a week he was blubbing on his knees at Mr. Playfair's feet. That gentleman simply said:

"It is not my business to squeeze the life out of you, or even to kick you down-stairs. I am not a man of impulse, and I have seen a great deal of rascality in this world. But I recommend you to rid me of your presence in the shortest possible time; for fear I should be tempted to go beyond my duty, and do something which, as a man of business, I may repent."

To Pettingall's attempted whinings about his wife and children, Mr. Playfair merely said:

"How dare you, who have forgotten them, while planning and plotting this heartless and wholesale robbery, day by day, and night by night, ask me, who am a stranger, to be so much more merciful than yourself; and to commit an act of injustice and dishonesty, which it would be, to intercede for you

with him, whom you have plundered and wronged? Get out of the room, sir, do you hear me? and be quick. You abuse my patience, you scoundrel, you do. What!"

Here he made a step towards Pettingall, who disappeared in a clammy mist of terrified tears, and with the perspiration of detected guilt exuding from every pore.

It was but a very short time after his late recorded conversation with Mr. Grinderby, that Arthur Aubrey might have been seen by any idle office lad, or still idler conveyancing pupil, who had nothing better to do than to watch the movements of strangers, wending his way across the dingy legal barrack-yard known as Webb's Fields, which at some remote period we may presume had some title to that name, towards the particular fly-trap, whose entrance was distinguished by Messrs. Grinderby and Cousen's illustrious names. Mr. Aubrey was deeply wrapped, in meditation, which was of an engrossing but by no means pleasant kind.

Not being, therefore, at all in a philosophical or inquiring mood, he entirely omitted to notice the peculiar characteristics of the locality, which were in great force that day. He did not remark the seedy, mildewy, whity-brown-aproned, washed-out-looking porters, who stood in twos and threes, as if they had brought a message from some grim old departed lawyer in the World of Shades which required no answer, and would be thankful to any one who would send a note to the same place, and give them sixpence to pay Charon for ferrying their ema-

ciated spectres over the Styx. He failed to observe the stout policeman threatening to eject a weazened old woman of eighty years and upwards, who was tending and guarding the toddling frolics of a very small and dirty female child; the extraordinary number of flaunting females, and girls, apparently of the milliner class, who seemed to have legal appointments in the Fields, and consultations in its chambers; the dissipated, rake-helly fellow lounging across in shooting-jacket and smoking-cap, pipe in mouth; the dirty state of the windows; the pert, lawyer-like air of the sparrows; and the tameness of the pigeons, which fancy might easily have imagined were animated by the spirits of departed clients, and fed with a sort of mild poetic reparation at the expense of the benchers, or, rather, of the bloated funds of the Fields. All this was utterly unnoticed by the hurrying and pre-occupied Aubrey, who with rapid strides bisected transversely that dismal, old, dissipated, insolvent-looking manufactory of legal abomination and sin. Nay, he passed unnoticed even the salutations of two very pretty and attractive young ladies, who must, at least, have just gained a lawsuit, or have received information of a legacy; or otherwise have had some great stroke of good fortune connected with Themis, so irrepressibly joyous and exuberantly delighted did they seem. Yet so bent was Mr. Aubrey on the demolition of the double-dyed rascal Pettingall, that jovial and free-spoken as he ordinarily was, he did not observe the salutations and remarks lavished upon him by these light-hearted and fair-haired demoiselles. An

inquiry after his maternal parent was lost in air, and a theory advanced as to his good-nature fell for ever dead and unanswered, so far as he was concerned. Even an altered tone and style in their observations, so soon as he had passed them, entirely escaped him. The fact is, his thoughts were bent on the Old Bailey and vengeance; and Webb's Fields, with all its past traditions and present features, its beauties and blemishes, its pebbly gravel, which might have been triturated from the stony hearts of generations of defunct attorneys long since struck off the rolls of mortality and gone home to another, and, let us hope, so far as their bedevilments are concerned, a better world—Webb's Fields, with its benchers and wenchers, its clerks and its sparks, its fogeys and its bogeys, its knots of porters, if not its porters' knots, its pigeons, sparrows, nursery children, dining-halls, pump, and clock, was to him

A simple square and nothing more.

“Simple!” with its gravel cemented with widows' tears; its pavements worn with the weary feet of baffled litigants, heavy with ruined hopes, but lighter for the loss of the gold which the rapacious talons of the legal harpies therein congregating had filched and torn away? “Simple!” with the true stories that might be told of it peopling with ghastly shapes and curdling with their dim and dreary revelations the dull and misty air? “Simple!” with *fi. fa.* and *ca. sa.* whispering in the gusty breezes that whirled the dust of dead mens' bones, and yellow parchments, and unswept offices in your face, and echoing by

night the shrill scream of oath from the slums that border the greater portion of two sides of the parallelogram, whose corner-stone was surely laid by a prince, the "Prince of Darkness" himself, who "was a gentleman" by Act of Parliament, be it understood? "Simple!" with its interminable web of delay, and malice, and form, and falsehood, and robbery, and deceit, through which the wealthy suitor may flounder, but the poor client leaves his empty sucked-out case, and brittle shiny wings, with which he flew in, either unawares, or because he couldn't help it, or was a fool, like the poor gilded fly? "Simple!" with all those hungry business dens, and their remorseless occupants within, writing and copying like grim and galvanised Death to feed their grimmer and grimier life of sin, "to eat and drink, array themselves, and live?" "Simple!" with those strange supplementary haunts of eccentric penury, and cheap and vulgar debauchery which fill up the vacancies of this charming abode, and people its windows with stray lights, when the greater portion of the legal denizens have washed their talons towards dinner-time, and gone home to the bosom of their affectionate families in suburban squares?

This is Webb's Fields, as some view it; but by no means all. We suppose that the young widow of a drowned sailor regards the sea with different eyes from Miss Clementina at Margate, with a volume of Byron, Bulwer, or Marryat in her hand. This is the jaundiced view of a man of griefs and losses—of one who has known what it is to wait weary hours in a lawyer's office, when the clerks look sneeringly at

him, and say audibly one to another: "Oh! it's only old Sadcase, him as lost all his property in that suit—you know—Weasel *v.* Sadcase, in which Serjeant Squeezer made that famous speech. It's in the last volume of Scribbler and Squitty's Reports." This is the view of the plundered and cleaned out; the out-at-elbows client with a sick wife and large family, who want port wine and sea air, and possibly better food and more of it, and who had been rich, but for the common practice of Webb's Fields. Bless those lively young clerks, it is no more to them than dissecting to an enthusiastic Sawbones, when he is appointed demonstrator of anatomy at Guy's! This is nothing but a mere morbid view taken by broken clients and ruined men. It is not shared in, believe us, by prosperous gentlemen, and those who can afford to change their lawyers and tax their bills. Yes, it is upon the carcass that the legal vulture principally thrives and feeds. You, my lord, and you, madam, with your ample fortune, may not appreciate, or even understand, this bitterness of reproach, this minute description of things and of places unknown in your experience. Your sleek family solicitor is a pleasant and comfortable personage. He only now and then puts you out of temper; because he delays your daughter's marriage settlement, and is so unconscionably slow in the re-investment of that mortgage money of yours which has been paid back so long. You don't suspect that he is playing with the money. Oh dear no! He is far too trustworthy and respectable a man. We hope for your sake that his speculations may never entirely

go wrong. Until then, you will continue to consider our delineation of human spiderdom harsh, exaggerated, and untrue. We trust, fair sir and proud lady, that you may never have cause to alter your opinions. Whether we ourselves have suffered or not from the iniquity of the legal system and practice, we shall not tell. Suffice it to say, that we have seen enough of their workings to adopt the black and morbid view, which we have just now endeavoured to convey.

But then we go much further than suffices for the condemnation of a mere portion of the attorney gang. We denounce their whole existence as a national blot, as an excrescence, and an unnecessary evil, of pernicious and fungus-like growth. We say that the whole standing or sedentary army of "solicitors," as they are called, ought to be abolished and put down, not only on account of individuals, but the State. Here in England, we have nearly twenty thousand men apprenticed from boyhood to the master and originator of all evil and wrong, creating and fostering enmity, malice, uncharitableness, in order to produce litigation in its worst forms of injustice, absurdity, and excess. Worse than this, the elections of the whole country are in their hands. Who practises, and shields, and encourages corruption and bribery, direct and indirect, but your solicitor? Who knows the secrets of the rich and great, and bullies and persecutes the poor and the small? Who goes about like a lay Jesuit spreading suspicion, disunion, hatred, and mistrust in all circles? Who widens the breach, nay the gulf which unhappily exists between classes,

between the higher and the middle, and the lower classes of the community? Who is the curse of town and village, of city and farm-house alike? Who but the legal agent and inquisitor, the rich man's prompter to harshness, and the poor man's deadliest foe? Who, when a man is down in the world, counsels his creditors to lose more money, rather than give him a chance to retrieve his fortunes, or ever to get his head again above the slough of ruin and despond? What is the answer to the agonising plea for time? "I can do nothing in it. It is in the hands of my solicitor." It is not so in America, a new country—it is not so in France, an old one. At least there is nothing so universal and so bad. And what does the solicitor do besides, in the capacity of active curse? He is an obstacle in the way of all rational reform; all cheap transfer of land, or personalty; all simplification of titles, and leases, and wills; and the easy and common-sense recovery of debts. He is the foe of equity and compromise, and recovery of every kind, save "fine and recovery," and concurrent monstrosities of form. All this is nothing new, and yet it is not so very old. It is not so very long, since the birth and growth of the modern attorney-at-law out of the old scrivener and notary. Why should not men keep their own deeds, and make their own transfers, purchases, sales, mortgages, and the like, with the aid of law-writers, and public registrations, and the best counsel to be had direct, depending on success and character for reputation, whose fee should be paid by the client himself; ready money, or credit, just as may be settled between the

pair? The counsel might say at once, "You have no case, my man;" or, "I advise you to make the best terms you can;" or, "I'll fight your cause and see you through it. You shall pay me so much, if I succeed; if not, nothing." What monstrosity it is, that an attorney can recover his bill of costs, whilst an advocate has no remedy! What a mighty hotch-potch of iniquity the whole system is; and how it withers and depraves many of the finest energies and qualities of tens of thousands of Englishmen. The most beneficial use made of solicitors is by rogues. They profit by all the chicaneries and worst features of the law. The best education for a swindler is a legal one.

Mr. Grinderby was an excellent and enthusiastic lawyer. To him the law was what it is to too many, the study of malevolence, avarice, trickery, and legalised fraud.

CHAPTER XII.

A DIGRESSION ON ATTORNEYDOM AND ITS WORKS.

Les hommes de chiquane emportant à dos de mulet les beaulx deniers prins ung à ung par le chicquanous aux veufres, orphelins, et aussy à d'aultres.—*La Mère du Roy*, BALZAC.

“Cil qui ha prins ceste ioye est il fourny de deniers?” demande le iuge.

“Oh ! bien.”

“Doncques il payera chier. Qui est-ce?”

“Monseigneur Du Fou.”

“Voilà qui change la cause,” dit le iuge.

“Et la iustice?” feit elle.

“J’ay dict la cause et non la iustice,” repartit le iuge.

La Belle Fille de Portillon.

THERE is no sentiment or feeling in the administration of British Law. In civil cases, the longest purse generally wins, especially when coupled with the most unscrupulous practice. In criminal cases, it is an excellent thing to have plenty of money, not to bribe the judge, but to purchase the whole panoply of just or unjust defence, and, above all, to command that consideration, commiseration, and interest which money always insures in this mercantile country. How much better your “alibi” looks, if you have twenty thousand pounds ! How much less probable does your alleged crime appear, if you are worth one

hundred thousand pounds, more or less ! What chance has a needy suitor or defendant when pleading before a well-to-do and respectable Themis ! Truly Justice is blind in England, and holds the scales. You may have been victimised to any extent by a lawyer, made penniless and driven mad by chicanery and delay, and it shall avail you nothing ; since you cannot legally introduce this into the case, and place it on record in due form. Nay, the judge will instruct the jury purposely, that they must not allow themselves to be biassed by anything which does not form part of the strict issue before them. “ You must dismiss from your minds the facts incidentally brought before you that the plaintiff seduced the defendant’s wife, after ruining him by the most complex conspiracy ; that he spent moneys intrusted to him on parole, and sold him to all his enemies. The question is, does the defendant owe the plaintiff six shillings and eightpence on this transaction, or did the prisoner knock the prosecutor down, or call him by an actionable term ? ”

In France, the whole history is elicited by the Court by a series of interrogatories, and circumstances are taken into consideration. There, a man is allowed to have a heart, feelings, and passions. There, systematic scoundrelism is exposed and dealt with. Here, it is favoured by the friendly intervention of the Law. In France, if we are informed aright, “ of lawyers and notaries there is no end ” in the galleys of Toulon. They are not fenced round with impunity, as they are here. There are single

lawyers in the galleys ; they ought to link "firms" with a connecting chain. They are clothed in coarse canvas trousers and shirts, branded with their numbers (as they put their real or imaginary clients' initials on their tin boxes), and they wear a woollen jacket to keep them warm during the remainder of their earthly career. "Their faces, close shaven, bronzed by exposure to the sun, and brutalised by crime, are fearful to behold;" and "their repulsive appearance is heightened by their hair being notched short in lines running round the head, in order to facilitate their recognition, should they escape." This is what they do with dishonest lawyers in France. In England, it is different. We were about to say that there are no dishonest lawyers in England, that is, judging by the results to themselves, not their clients. Perhaps the converse of the proposition is nearly true. The present laws of England, however, seem principally to be made for rogues. "Who," wrote, in effect, a powerful journalist, some years since, "prevents that scoundrel from being taken by the neck by the police, as in France, and dragged before the Tribunal within an hour? Who but these execrable difficulty-makers, the lawyers?"* "The law itself is too weak for the lawyers; they defy it, obstruct it, ignore it, render it futile and abortive;" that is, when it suits them to do so. Even to take a whole department as a specimen, "Doctors' Commons threatened to be im-

* See some admirable articles in the "Weekly Dispatch" some years ago. We can only quote from fragments without dates.

mortal, until the Doctors were guaranteed compensation, when they discovered that they were a superfluous nuisance, and abated themselves."

But how does England deal with her erring legal pets, the too funny "gentlemen by Act of Parliament," who now and then o'erstep, in their zeal for practice, even the wide limits which they have assigned themselves? Pentonville and Portland are not their just destination, unless they steal pocket-handkerchiefs or spoons, which would argue a want of success in their legitimate professional career.

"A solicitor convicted of wilful and corrupt perjury!" (See daily papers.) This is really distressing. We thought that such agreeable latitude was allowed in the exercise of the calling. This man being convicted must be more honest than many of his fellows. He has had to do with other attorneys, and they have been too much for him.

"The Liquidator of the Bogus Bank, limited, v. two Attorneys." In this case the Court evidently recognises fraud; but, for some motive, through some distorted freak of the judicial mind, lets the afflicted beings off.

"The Lord Chief Justice '*regretted*'" (Did he now?) "that attorneys should mix themselves up in schemes for concocting Companies. Such duties were not *strictly professional*" (Indeed!), "and said that such companies are mere delusions, by which the public are induced to invest money, which is spent in legal charges and in winding-up the undertaking," &c. &c.*

* The above was literally said. The lawyers in question thus idly

Such are among the notes and remarks we find in our Diary of the blank day of blank, A.D. 1867.

If an ordinary person, guilty or not guilty, is accused of any crime whatsoever—if he is the manifest victim of threatened extortion—does the Press conceal *his* name? We suppose that in the last case we have quoted, either it is a special privilege of attorneydom, on its trial, not to be named or specified; in which case it is a gross and monstrous anomaly and folly; or the newspapers were afraid lest these interesting legal Siamese Twins should commence all manner of proceedings against them. We have seen this sort of thing before. When an attorney has to show cause why he should not be “struck off the rolls,” the same delightful reticence is observed. The interesting victim of rabid and vindictive clients, this boa-constrictor worried by rabbits, this hyena lugged bruised and bleeding into court by new-born babes, remains anonymous, more unknown, probably, than the author of “Junius;” because, unless you are fortunate enough to know very few solicitors indeed, you cannot even guess at his name. Why this insane forbearance, this corrupt buffoonery on behalf of “gentlemen,” who know so well how to take care of themselves as your attorneys? It is simply a part of the abuse and absurdity of the whole British system of Law, from base to apex of the pyramidal iniquity built with the skulls and bones of thousands and ten thousands of

branded by the judge, not only got their costs, but a large sum for promotion out of the Company, and escaped without even the mention of their names!

victims to the rapacity, extortion, avarice, delays, and complex injustice which the Law prescribes, encourages, necessitates, defends, and practises.

What is a solicitor? * we ask. It is a word of modern date. It is meant perhaps to be more genteel than the word attorney. Or, was it devised in order to divert attention from the original birth and existence of our "legal friend"? The atourney would have been the champion in the lists, of those who could not fight for themselves, in the days of chivalry. Fancy a real attorney in our sense existing in those times! Such a one fought by proxy for the minor, the sick person, the aged and infirm. Thence he came to be the licensed representative and interpreter of the ignorant; of those who towards the latter part of the Dark Ages could neither read nor write. He appeared for Higg and Snell, the offspring of Saxon serfs. Are we still so benighted and ignorant as to require such services now? He would seem to have shown the cloven foot very early; since we find that by the Statute 32 Hen. VI., it was enacted that there should be "but six common attorneys in Norfolk, six in Suffolk, and two in Norwich, if that shall seem reasonable to the justices." Again, we find in "An exact Abridgement of all Statutes in force and use from Magna Carta until 1641, by E. Wingate, of Grayes Inne, Esq.," published in 1660, that "if an attorney delay his client's suit for gain, or demand by his bill more than his due fees and disbursements,

* It means especially the lawyer who practises in equity, but the terms are now confounded. Every attorney is "——, Esquire, Solicitor."

the client shall recover against him his costs and treble damages, and he himself shall be for ever disabled from being an attorney or solicitor any more." This would make fine havoc were it really acted upon in the present day. You tax a solicitor's bill now, and must get a large proportion disallowed, or have to pay the costs of taxation. But whatever you get, it does not invalidate a modern attorney's practice.

Again, "If an attorney be found notoriously in fault, he shall forswear the court, and never be admitted in any other court."

"Notoriously in fault!" What now-a-days comes up to, or does not come up to, this phrase? We presume that it is far too severe to characterise the two attorneys whom "the Lord Chief Justice regretted should mix themselves up in schemes for concocting Companies," which "are mere delusions, and by which" (he said) "the public are robbed, while nothing is spent, save in legal charges and in winding-up the undertaking." At all events, even their names are held sacred, while that of any one not belonging to this privileged class is by no means thus shielded, on a *primâ facie* charge, whether he be guilty or not guilty of anything imputed to him. When fraud and artifice are reduced to a system, in order to plunder under the mantle of respectability and the protection of authority—and this in every circle and department of a country, public and private legislative representation itself being for the most part in the lawyer's hands—what must be the issue? The evil increases, until it would seem that nothing short of revolution can shake the demon off the

nation's neck. And how much more deadly and dangerous the revolution, which should arise from a web of oppression and injustice spread over all classes, than that which the iniquity of a single tyrant or succession of tyrants and their ministers might engender? It would be like a nation rising against itself, and no one could foresee the solution or the end.

Among the many facetious stories told of the appreciation in which attorneys have been held is the following, which, however well known, we do not scruple to give here. Peter the Great, Czar of Muscovy, being in England in Term time, and seeing multitudes swarming about the Great Hall, wherein are held the three superior Courts of judicature, is reported to have asked some one about him "who all those busy people were, and what they were about?" Being answered, "They are lawyers, sir." "Lawyers!" returned he. "Why I have but two in my whole dominions, and I design to hang one of them the moment I get home."

Perhaps, however, there is more amusement to be derived from the consideration of a plain English statute, when statutes were plain, taken in connexion with what has been the reality of the case nearly ever since, and what the state of things is now. By 4 Hen. IV., c. 18, it was enacted that "none should be admitted, but such as were virtuous, learned, and sworn to do their duty." The virtue of the craft—whatever they may swear to, like the Sultan at his installation as a Knight of the Garter—is, we should think, on a par with the philanthropy of a crocodile or the vegetarianism of a shark. Again, the Statute

(An. 1403) recites this item: "For sundry damages and mischiefs which have ensued before this time to divers persons of the realm by a great number of attorneys, they shall be good, virtuous, and of good fame."

The subject is very tempting for a jest. Attorneys could at one time only employ two clerks (*vide* Maryham's "Complete Collection of Statutes relating to Solicitors"). We do not know if that law has been repealed; but probably it has. If not, they break the law with impunity in this, as in many other things. The 33 Hen. VI., c. 7 (1455), recites "a practice of contentious attorneys to stir up suits for their private profits."

Even in those days we learn that people "dared not complain of y^e extortions and y^e oppressions" of the attorneys. By the 3rd Edw. I., a penalty on any attorney was inflicted for *deceit*! He was imprisoned for a year and a day. It has long since been permitted that a lunatic may appear by attorney; and a whole nation of lunatics avail themselves of the privilege. An attorney formerly could not practise in gaol. Heaven knows what they may or may not do now; since the fraternity have managed to wriggle out of almost every penalty and disability formerly imposed upon them. But we cannot help thinking that a gaol would be a very proper place for many to practise in, but not on behalf of their clients.

Formerly under-sheriffs were not allowed to be attorneys. This has been repealed, 1 Vic., c. 55, like everything else that stood in the way of chicanery and

wrong, under pretence of "amendment and consolidation." Heaven save the mark !

In a speech of Lord Bathurst in Parliament in 1737, he is reported to have said, speaking of the causes of riots and tumults, and referring to the insurrection of Wat Tyler, that "the people complained that their domestick enemies, the lawyers, ruined them with vexatious suits and extorsive fees." This he gave as one of the chief reasons for that rebellion. This evil has been going on ever since ; it is at this moment greater than ever. Politically the lawyers are corrupting the whole State. Their fraud, oppression, and corruptions, are assisting to bring about revolution now. Since these evils cannot be, or are not, amended or reformed, they will bring about a violent deliverance, if they do not destroy the nation as a first-rate power. Parliament is chiefly returned by lawyers. Lawyers draw the bungling Acts of Parliament, through which they themselves teach men to break.

No man is so much afraid of the law—even such as it is—being brought to bear upon himself and his own alleged or imputed misdeeds, providing it be by a sufficiently rich man—as a lawyer. The reason of this is obvious. If by some miracle the attorney has justice on his side, he knows that he may be cast by the law ; if he has acted wrongly, he is instinctively reluctant to be exposed. Nevertheless, almost every one shrinks from attacking a solicitor. Yet we have known one, soundly thrashed and kicked before his own clerks, to put up with the inconvenience and indignity, without applying to the police, or even commencing an action. The attorney now-a-days is a most important part of the social system of Great

Britain. Fifty years ago, he was still kept somewhat in check. Barristers were tabooed, and struck off the bar-mess, who were found guilty of "hugging," or even associating with attorneys. Judges snubbed them, and kept them in order. They were frequently ordered out of court. Lately, when Mr. Chisholm Anstey acted as judge in India, he dealt with what he considered to be fraud rather harshly, i.e., justly, and the whole legal set combined against him. Here, in England, the power of this abnormal and wholly unnecessary, unconstitutional, and *illegal* body, is enormous. It undermines all Society; it is a standing menace against honesty, and union, and peace among men; it exists and flourishes by the practice of the basest acts and the lowest trickery. Woe be-tide him in temporary difficulties, he shall never lift up his head again! The simplest business is protracted and delayed in the cruellest manner. A lawyer wants all your deeds and papers. You send them to him. He runs you up and delivers a bill of costs. You object to it; he retains your papers—you go to another lawyer, who, ten to one, will not press him, and they both plunder you. These are the mildest cases. On the other hand, rich creditors place their debts in their lawyer's hands, and then will listen to no proposal for time from a debtor who is only desirous to pay. They refer you to their lawyer; the lawyer back to his client. The debtor is the shuttlecock, and it ends with a writ and its consequences. The client may lose his money in ruining the debtor, and does it all under his lawyer's advice. We have known enormous expenses incurred

in a client's name, whose estate was in the lawyers' clutches, whilst he was starving. There is a daily correspondence about him which costs pounds. He visits his own property on foot, and speaks to a tenant. The tenant leaves him to touch his hat to a man in a brougham. He asks who it is. It is a solicitor's clerk. He is sent there that day to go through a farce of pretended inquiry, because the office has a clerk at leisure, and business must be made. A man has a legacy left him and is ruined by it. A case like this has been painted by Charles Dickens. And the beauty of it is, that these very lawyers do not pretend to understand law or equity. They state a case for counsel, which you must not do for yourself. The counsel's fees are not recoverable, forsooth; and a lawyer sues his client thus for money which he has not disbursed and possibly never will pay. Counsel do not *always* receive the fees which solicitors have charged and received on their behalf. Why are the honour and honesty of this especial class of men to be blindly trusted to—they who give no trust? If you take your deeds to a solicitor, he lays his legal paw on them as a matter of course, and while you owe him six and eightpence, he keeps them. If you want, in the mean time, to look at one of your own leases, you are lucky to get it the first time you call, and the solicitor insists on a receipt from you! But is the guild, the body, without stain or suspicion even of enormous criminal frauds? By no means. Look at that case of Cheslyn Hall, a wonderfully "respectable and eminent practitioner," some time ago. But why particularise one? Attorneys, if they can manage

it, always spare men of their own profession, or rather trade. It wouldn't be desirable, they say, to press matters too far. They don't advise their clients to prosecute, or go to law with an attorney.

We have spoken of trade. What is attorneydom, save a trade, and that of a not very exalted character? They don't sell you law, at least, not directly—they go to the barrister for that. They sell you forms of law over an imaginary legal counter. They are not even as apothecaries to surgeons or physicians, for the latter send you to the former, but the solicitor consults his physician for you. He poisons you with his legal drugs under the cover of superior advice. These men, who, half a century ago, hardly or seldom ranked as gentlemen, who did not presume to call themselves "esquires," who could not get into a respectable club, now affect not only gentility, but exclusiveness. Yet they are admitted into Society, as we once heard remarked, like the knaves among the court cards of the pack. We saw lately the case of a low provincial fellow of this description who, in defending a dishonest cad against a just claim, addressed a letter to a neighbouring squire, and colonel commanding a regiment, "Mr." So-and-So. This insolence is common in the trade. The solicitor, who sells forms and procedures of law like a cheese-monger (only that the trade is not so direct or honest), gives himself airs, keeps his clients waiting in his ante-room purposely, and acts generally in a manner which one hundred years ago would have caused him to provoke and receive a batooning or a hearty kicking. Things are changed, and we have made such

astonishing progress! Have we? Yes, certainly, in some things. Railways, for example. Apropos of these, there is the tourist solicitor. You cannot leave him behind anywhere. *Post equitem sedet atra cura*; you travel second-class on account of that enormous lawyer's bill which you have just received. Your solicitor travels first-class, for the same reason. Attorneys are always going express *somewhere*, and we fear that the country is going with them.

It is of no avail that the dramatist and romancist are continually holding up the mirror, and telling us what a pattern scamp the modern solicitor often is. Look at the varieties of the breed. You have the money-lending solicitor, the military and clerical solicitor, the thieves' solicitor, the gaol solicitor, and the solicitor, par excellence, of women of the town—the legal adviser of felony, and of the “Social Evil.” “Social Evil,” indeed! Attorneydom is *the* “Social Evil” of the age. And these men are not to be exposed by name!

Once more, “*In re* an Attorney (in the case of the Bogus Bank, limited) *v.* two Attorneys.” These masked gentlemen have probably got a swinging bill of costs out of the plundered shareholders of the Bubble Company which they themselves, the said attorneys, entirely “concocted,” besides the promotion money. But “oh, no! we never mention them, their names are never heard.” My Lord Mortgage, or Squire Cashless, clients of a firm thus protected by the amenities of a swindling era, reads perchance a report in the papers headed as above, without the slightest consciousness that his own legal advisers and

“ eminent ” solicitors, are the very identical pair of “ concoctors ” described.

“ Dear me ! ” he says, “ how fortunate I am in commanding the professional services of men beyond suspicion, like Cuttle, Cuttle, and Fyshe.”

Yes, beyond suspicion, when their names are thus concealed ; but let Lord Mortgage and Squire Cashless look out ! They shall never extricate themselves from the legal embrace of Messrs. Cuttle, Cuttle, Fyshe, and Co., till there is nothing left of them save dry bones. In the-mean time it is refreshing to know that the elder Cuttle gives most delightful parties in Tyburnia, that his charming daughters were lately presented at Court, that the elder son of Fyshe is a field-officer of Volunteers, and keeps a yacht off Erith, and the younger rides a white Arab in the Park.

As for stealing spoons and forks, we can hardly imagine such straightforward and comparatively innocuous wickedness as simple burglary or larceny on the part of an attorney who was likely to succeed in his trade. Yet one lately *was* tried for this sort of offence. It might have enhanced his legal merit and embellished his fall, if he had sent in a bill of costs to the party robbed—say some old lady client—including such an entry as, “ To consultation with Bill Sykes and another outside your area gate, when we decided not to attempt anything that night, six shillings and eightpence.” “ To conference with your servant-girl, when she stated the locality of your plate-chest and where you kept your keys, thirteen shillings and fourpence.” “ To long inter-

view with Mr. M'Pledgit, the pawnbroker, when he informed us that your silver was so old-fashioned that it was only fit for melting down, and it was finally decided that it should go to the melting-pot, one pound one shilling. To cabs, refreshments, bribes, postages," &c.

Again, the solicitor may tell his client falsehoods, not white, but of the blackest dye; but he will be hardly such a bungler as to commit perjury, if he be worth his salt, unless the temptation is very overpowering indeed. Falsehoods! The current mark of the trade is falsehood and pretence. The vexatious and ruinous delays of a solicitor's office are three parts of them sheer invention and palpable lies. When he lends you Miss Pokeby's, an old lady's, money on mortgage, and insists upon six per cent., is it not his own capital that he invests on such favourable terms? You have to call twenty times—he can't see her—she has gone out of town—she is unwell—her money is at a bank on deposit, and she had to give notice. He grins and rubs his hands; he enjoys the agonies of your suspense. He is running up a swinging bill of costs, besides getting six per cent., and charging you twice his legitimate plunder. There is an expression, "Honour among thieves." There is a sort of necessary honour, even on the Turf in its present degraded state. There is none necessary to attorneys. On the contrary, it is dishonour on which they thrive. Look at the respectable West-end firm of Walker and Walker. They have persuaded their client Perkins to get judgment against a man in temporary difficulties,

who only wants time to pay, and who offers *proof* that he is raising the money to satisfy the claim of the obstinate British tradesman Perkins. They write to that debtor: "Dear Sir,—In answer to your letter we have to inform you that we have seen our client as to your request for time. Will you oblige us with a call the first time you are passing?" The debtor sends a friend, who is followed by a couple of Jew bailiffs, posted at those "respectable" solicitors' door, to arrest the debtor, should he call in the expectation of the friendly arrangement they have suggested.

A man in temporary difficulties was lately sued for, let us say, one hundred pounds, by the eminent City firm, Guffin, Runnacles, and Bunks. He got the money, and called on them directly after judgment was obtained. He asked one of the legal triad whom he saw whether they would take seventy pounds down, and the remainder in a month, as it would be a great convenience. "If you will be kind enough to sit down for a few minutes," was the answer, "we will send over to our clients" (a banking firm close by), "and ask them. I have no doubt they will accede to your request, sir." The "Times" was given to him to read, and he waited an hour. During that time the legal "gentleman" came in some three or four times. "Sorry to detain you so long," he observed. "The bank partners must be engaged." And he conversed quite amicably. At last he came in, and said very sharply, "Our clients are not in, sir. You'd better settle this in the proper quarter. It's out of our hands." "Oh!" says the debtor, "will you not take the money, then? If I must do

so, I am prepared to pay all." "You'd better settle the matter elsewhere," was the reply; and the attorney opened his door, outside of which a sheriffs' officer was waiting, who had been sent for, in place of the pretended bank message. The officer himself said it was "sharp practice," and "anything but gentlemanly conduct" on the part of the firm; but his prisoner had to proceed with him to a place of detention, until detainers were searched for, &c. &c. Had it happened that there were heavy detainers, these solicitors would have lost their clients' money. A short time afterwards the same partner in this gentlemanly triad was forced to hear the truth, and threatened with a horsewhipping by an officer in the army, whom he bound over to keep the peace. The officer told him that he was "a liar, a scoundrel, and a swindler," which in these days is oftener a greater offence than to merit those titles. And this was a most "respectable" and "eminent" firm!

These are samples of a body of men who, having got rid of all the conditions, restrictions, and penalties imposed upon them, when their fraternity was inaugurated, and their first practice allowed by a hesitating and cautious State, have gradually wriggled out of the observance of all salutary and precautionary restraint, as snakes cast their skins, until they are now coiled round every institution, public and private, throughout the land. The attorneydom of the nineteenth century is worse than the priesthood of the Dark Ages; for this reason, that it thoroughly degrades the national character, and undermines and injures all truth and principle,

honour and integrity, justice and morality. It has a finger in every pie, a hand in every business, a grasp upon all property, the garotter's clutch on the owner of nearly every estate. Such an abuse has it become that it makes Magna Charta valueless, and freedom a mockery and a joke. As for the Law, upon which malpractice is founded, it is a huge—we had well-nigh said chaotic—mass of rotten and pernicious absurdity, from a newly-established County Court, where the amusing farce of petty oppression and chicanery might tickle the risibility of a vulgar and malignant *Diable Boiteux*, up to the heavy dead-lock of an appeal to the House of Lords, whose select senile conclave of three solemnly toss the legal halfpenny—in jest or earnest, which is it? Let the victims tell. If the money only lasts, and their lordships are equally divided—that is, out of four, we will say, two are asleep, and of the other two one has been judge in a previous stage of the same affair, then counsel may invite the withdrawal of the judgment of the junior law lord present.* Let us imagine such judgment to be on the plaintiff's side, it is he who thus elects to be in a minority, and he can then "allege error in the record," and "submit the whole matter for review to the Court of Exchequer," &c. &c. Where there are four law lords, it is evident that each party may win two tosses—one cries "heads" twice, and the other "woman." There *are* two "heads," somewhat the worse for wear, and two "women," old women, perhaps. What is to be done? Begin again,

* *Vide* "the Slade case," which will doubtless form a distinguished precedent of high-class litigation. Since settled, as it might and should have been at first, by the parties concerned.

my noble sportsmen! You must not shoot off ties, so recommence without drawing your stakes. It is not, however, the law which we are anxious to touch upon. We only say that the wilderness is suited to its jackals, the disease to the vermin whom it produces, and by whom it is produced.

Is there no remedy for all this? Assuredly. Let common-sense and self-preservation, let the Press and Parliament intervene. Let the advocate be restored to his position. Let the solicitor drop his name and business, and become the scrivener and law-writer, and the attorney for the ignorant and illiterate protected by heavy penalties as before. There should be no idle counsel, no nominal barristers seeking for patronage or place. At least, the examinations should be made such as to insure the highest talent at the Bar. There should be a Supreme Court as in America. Counsel should be permitted to see their clients. A distinguished Counsel might keep a staff of fifty clerks and law-writers, if he pleased. Only let not these men be licensed practitioners, vultures, kites, and harpies of the law. Suppose that a client comes to some great Counsel. He is told that he is too busy to see him, and betakes himself elsewhere. This would prevent that which so often happens, the acceptance of a brief by a great man, who cheats—yes, cheats his client by never reading his case, or uttering a word for him in Court. Let us suppose that he sees him and hears a verbal statement. “Well, my good man!” he says, “you have no case, or you have a case. I will undertake it, or I will not undertake it.

You had better not go to law, or you had better fight it out. You have a defence, or no defence." Or, he might say, "Go to one of my scriveners and reduce the facts of your case to writing. I will then give you an opinion." It would be quite fair to make a bargain, in the case of a poor man, or any man—why not? It must be remembered that the barrister would depend upon his character as well as ability for a great business. It may be said that this could not be done in the present voluminous state of the law, and with our ridiculous forms of sale, transfer, mortgage, together with the complication of precedents, and the ponderosity and obscurity of title-deeds. Of course not. We want a code, we want a perfect system of registry for all titles, mortgages, sales, transfers, &c. &c., and we want simplicity of form. Without this, attorneydom must continue to flourish, like the upas-tree, surrounded by the dead and dying virtues and moralities of the nation, and the bones and carcasses of the thousands of victims whom it has robbed and murdered. In these days, if a man steal your purse, he does not steal "trash;" he takes that without which a good name goes a very little way indeed; nay, without which it very often ceases to be a good name. For now, more than at any period in the world's history, money makes the man. We do not speak of those whom no amount of money will make happy, or educated, or content, or well. We do not mean those who have enough to live upon, and who can afford to despise riches. But we speak of those who are stripped of

all; and when the lawyers once get a good hold of you, they seldom leave you, whilst anything remains to be engulfed in the legal maw.

There are honest attorneys of course. The aloe flowers, but not often. Your honest solicitor is as common as a black swan, when the Roman poet wrote. We include "Writers to the Signet" in Scotland, who may be supposed now and then to produce a swan, black or white, amongst them. We ourselves know a most praiseworthy firm. They have a sound and extensive practice, and can afford to be what they are, conscientious, and even occasionally Quixotic and generous. Their charges are high to those who can afford to pay, but the article they sell is good, and may be depended on. Doubtless, the conscious partners will blush when they read this eulogy. Nathless, could we pronounce the doom of the craft, not even for the sake of these would we save all, and say, "peradventure there be fifty righteous found." After all it is the system, not the men, against whom our observations are levelled, and as we have written in the interests of our fellow-citizens, we pray that this gentle satire may be so received and understood.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPIDER IN HIS DEN.

"'Justice?'" said that brisk little elderly counsel, Mr. Phunne, who is making a very good thing at the Bar. "I should have thought you knew better than to talk of that. Law is much more powerful than justice, don't you know? Ha, ha!" and he laughed a merry little pleasant laugh. "'Nonsuit?' Of course the plaintiff was nonsuited. Why, Serjeant Gableton had only five guineas on his brief, and he wasn't paid even that. 'Then why did he take it?' Well, I can't exactly say. But he got finely complimented by the Court for the manner in which he behaved. I dare say it has paid him well enough. 'New trial?' Don't he wish he may get it? Where's the money to come from? 'Ill-used?' I should think the poor wretch was. Bless you, you should have heard what his own junior counsel said to me in Court. He thought *he* was going to conduct the case. But Gableton came in at the last moment. 'Never read his brief?' I dare say not. Why should he? That was the last thing he wanted to do. 'Burning shame?' I don't say it wasn't. But Gableton knows what he is about. He is as clever and rising a man as there is going. 'You'd like to expose him?' Pooh, pooh! So would a good many, I dare say. Are you the Quixote of universal humanity? Ha! ha! ha!"—*Every-day Conversation anywhere.*

MR. AUBREY was not quite so long in reaching Spider-court as we have been in recording a very brief portion of his journey thither. The buildings were of red brick, and of modern date. We forget the history of their erection; but it is rather pleasing to imagine that there was a fire there at some period, which caused a portion of the Fields to be rebuilt.

Messrs. Grinderby and Cousens had their names painted in large white letters over a black door. This was, doubtless, a necessity; but rather a contradiction, since their names were, or ought to have been, blacker than any door, whether it led to Chancery or the infernal regions. One naturally thought of the business of the place, to turn black into white, and the reverse, by all the arts of falsehood.

Mr. Aubrey gave a smart double rap, and was duly admitted by an unwholesome clerk.

"Is Mr. Cousens in?" inquired Aubrey.

"I'll see, sir, if you'll step in."

As if he didn't know; but this is part of legal etiquette and caution. So he wrote a name on a slip and took it in.

"Ah! Aubrey," quoth the cheerful voice of Phil Cousens, stepping briskly out of his room, attired in a dark cut-away coat and black-ribbed trousers, with shiny boots as usual; "step in, step in!" And he rubbed his hands. "Punctual, eh? Grinderby will be disengaged in a moment—got a painful case—woman in tears, children, and all that. Deuced nuisance—can't get rid of her. Well, how are things in Queen's-square? Mrs. Aubrey well, I hope? Sold the bay nag yet? Here" (to clerk, whom he had rung for during these questions, to which Aubrey appropriately responded), "tell Mr. Grinderby that Mr. Aubrey—no, say the gentleman—is here by appointment, will you?"

"Have you arrested the scoundrel yet?" asked Arthur, as soon as the clerk had disappeared on his errand.

“Well, no; but he is all safe, ill in bed.”

“It’s a mere pretence. He’ll give you the slip yet!” cried Arthur, who, like many very amiable men, was furious and impatient when his anger was aroused. “I really do wish that you would be a little more energetic, Cousens. Most clients wouldn’t stand such inattention to their wishes. I really wonder Mr. Grinderby should be so slow about a thing like this.”

“My dear fellow,” replied Phil, “don’t be so impatient. I assure you no time has been lost. You know what a safe card Grinderby is, especially in such a matter as this. I dare say all is ready, and the arrest can take place this very afternoon, if you like. Stop! Perhaps you are in a hurry; I’ll call him in.”

So saying, Mr. Cousens opened a door as if to go in search of his senior partner; but, on second thought, he went out another way, leaving the door which he had opened slightly ajar, no doubt accidentally; if lawyers ever do anything accidentally in business hours, except make mistakes in their charges, but never in their clients’ favour. It should be stated that Mr. Cousens could communicate with Grinderby either through the clerks’ office, by which way Aubrey had entered, or through a small room which led to the den of the head of the firm.

That gentleman duly made his appearance with Cousens, in the course of a very few minutes.

“Well, Mr. Aubrey,” he said, after the usual salutations, “and what are we going to do with this fellow Pettingall?”

"Nay," replied Arthur, "I came to ask you what you had done. I am anxious that the matter should be delayed no longer."

"You know what I think, Mr. Aubrey," rejoined the lawyer; "but of course you will act as you please. It is not our duty, or, I may add, our desire to influence a client in such an affair. Prosecutions are expensive, and our motives might be misunderstood. People are always ready to impute blame to the profession, whatever happens. We are your mere agents, sir—your mere agents to carry out your views, always provided that it is fitting and legal to do so."

"Then," said Aubrey, good-humouredly, "I wish you would carry them out, and as speedily as possible."

"I will, however, go as far as this, as I think strongly, perhaps too strongly in a professional point of view, in this matter—I will say, Mr. Aubrey, that I greatly deprecate any consideration which you may think fit to extend towards this man Pettingall. I am aware that you cannot replace the loss—for I fear he is worth little or nothing—but the base ingratitude of the man has shocked my feelings, blunted as they ought to be, and, to a certain extent, are, by the experiences of a profession which too often brings us in contact with the worst, the vilest of mankind——"

"Really, Mr. Grinderby," said Aubrey, interrupting his dyspeptic Mentor's harangue, "I don't think you need say one word to prompt me to a sense of duty. My mind is made up, and I never felt more inclined to be firm."

"I rejoice to hear it, sir," observed Grinderby; "but I hope you will not be offended, if I tell you that I cannot place quite so much confidence in your firmness as I could wish. Your heart is too good, sir, much too good for this world. Excuse me, I am a lawyer, and an old one; and I have seen so much of these things. I have studied the amiability, the goodness—the—the, if I might say—the sentimental generosity of your character, and I said to Cousens this morning—did I not, Cousens?—our client, Mr. Aubrey, will not prosecute this man. And I have my fears—I say my fears, and my doubts still."

"I told him I knew you better," said Phil to Aubrey. "Soft-hearted, I said, he may be, and has been, God knows, enough. Look at his noble conduct towards that rascally Swindles Manvers, but he will never be such a fool as this would come to. I said 'fool,' didn't I, Grinderby?"

"Yes, you did, sure enough, Mr. Cousens," replied the other, "and I reproved you for using such an expression. Every gentleman has a right to do as he likes in such a matter; and if Mr. Aubrey likes to be robbed and plundered with impunity, he can. We have no right to dictate to him. Nor did you speak so confidently until this morning. Come! come! Mr. Cousens, tell the truth. Didn't you say, only yesterday, that you felt positive Mr. Aubrey would never prosecute this man? Ask him!" he added, addressing Aubrey, and pointing to Cousens, who sat nursing his knee and looking at the lustre of his inevitable patent-leather boots. "Didn't you tell me only yesterday, sir," continued Grinderby,

addressing his partner, "that you were afraid—yes, afraid, sir—that our client, Mr. Aubrey, this gentleman present, would not act with firmness on this occasion?"

"I certainly did say I did *not* think he would prosecute," was the answer; "but I think better of it now."

After delivering himself of this opinion, the accomplished Phil commenced picking his teeth, although before lunch-time, and consequently in mere anticipation of a tough chop at the Crow in Fleet-street. But the fact was Phil had just started a gold tooth-pick; a present, as he said, from a lady client. If that assertion was true, it was really a pledge of affection, as Phil assuredly bought it at a pawnbroker's in a neighbouring lane. Perhaps the lady was his cousin.

"I don't know, gentlemen," said Arthur, rather haughtily, "why you should be pleased to think me so weak. I came here to prosecute, and prosecute I will; even though you make it distasteful by urging me in such a manner, and paying so bad a compliment to my good sense."

"No offence, Mr. Aubrey—no offence, sir," said the elder partner. "Goodness of heart, although mistaken and in the extreme, even to condonation of the blackest crime, is all that Mr. Cousens has ventured to impute to you; and surely this need not anger you, sir, as I hope it does not. But it is my duty—yes, my duty—to advise you against a step foolish in itself, and which, if frequently indulged in, would uproot the foundations of Law and Society,

and make us a community of robbers—yes, of robbers and thieves.”

“Upon my word,” replied Aubrey, “this is utterly uncalled for. I have come here, I tell you, for the purpose of prosecuting this scoundrel, as he deserves.”

“I’m very glad to hear it, sir,” said Grinderby, rubbing his hands. “I trust, I beg, I entreat you not to relinquish your purpose.”

Here he rang a bell, and a clerk duly appeared.

“Is that person gone?” he asked, almost fiercely.

“No, sir; she said she would wait till you are disengaged.”

“Order her to leave the office instantly,” thundered Grinderby. “Mr. Cousens, sir, will you see to this?”

That gentleman, with apparent reluctance, shrugged his shoulders, and left the room *viâ* the clerks’ office. In about two minutes he returned, when sobs and exclamations in a female voice were plainly heard from the adjoining apartment, the door leading to which had, as we have stated, been accidentally left ajar.

“It’s no use,” said Phil. “Go yourself, Grinderby. I can’t stand that sort of thing. I never could. Poor soul! poor soul!”

Grinderby rose, took a pinch of snuff emphatically, and said, addressing Arthur :

“Excuse me for a few moments. I have no such tender scruples; but my junior partner here is too much devoted to the ladies to be proof against a few female tears. I shall send for the police, if necessary,

Mr. Cousens. They, at any rate, are not likely to display a sickly sentimentality."

Saying this, Mr. Grinderby left the room.

"The police!" observed Cousens, as the door shut on the head of the firm—"the police, indeed! They are not likely to display any scruples in such a case, mournful as it is. A policeman would lock up his own sober old mother on a night charge, and enter her as 'drunk and incapable' on the charge-sheet for five shillings, or swear that his own sister—libel or no libel—was a street-walker, in order to gratify his inspector, and prove himself a smart officer. Isn't that your opinion, Aubrey?"

The misdoings of the police were a great hobby of Arthur Aubrey's; and he would have expatiated on them for half an hour, only that his curiosity was piqued, and, let us add, his manhood aroused, by the idea that a woman was in tears and distress, and at the mercy of old Grinderby, whom at that moment he particularly disliked.

"May I ask," he said, "is it any secret who the person is whom I hear sobbing so frightfully?"

"Well," responded Cousens, "I don't know what Grinderby will say, but——"

"Oh!" interrupted Arthur, "I don't wish you to reveal the secrets of the prison-house. I have no right to inquire about a thing that don't concern me."

"Well, you see," said Cousens, "it *does* concern you. I differ from Grinderby, so far, that I can't see why you should not know all about it. I don't

think we have any right to hide it from you, and why should we? Grinderby was making signs at me all the time not to tell you——”

“Concerns me!” exclaimed Arthur, “and not tell me? A woman’s voice in grief? What does this mean, Cousens?”

“Well, the fact is,” said the other, “just before you came, we had a visit from Pettingall’s wife, poor devil! and her four children are with her. Grinderby ordered her out; but the woman was faint, and so I showed her into the clerks’ second room, and let her sit down. Unfortunately you came in, just as the door was about to be opened for her exit. She heard your voice, and insists upon seeing you.”

“Well, and why not, pray?” inquired the client, rather angrily.

“Why, you see,” said Cousens, bringing the gold toothpick into active show, “Grinderby is of opinion that you will relent; that you can’t stand the water-works, and the babies, and all that sort of thing. Grinderby is a stickler for justice; and in this case I must say I am with him; and he thinks you had better not see Mrs. Pettingall and her ‘kids,’ and I am decidedly of his opinion. That’s about it,” quoth Phil, who could not quite separate the phraseology of his unofficial life from the language of conventional attorneydom. In fact, when Grinderby was not present, Phil’s style of conversation resembled that of the professional gentlemen employed at the once notorious Judge and Jury Club, presided over by the late Chief Baron Nicholson.

At this moment, hysterical screams were heard, mingled with the cries of children. Mr. Cousens rose suddenly, saying :

“Confound it, how came the door open?”

And he shut the side-door just as Mr. Grinderby made his reappearance by the other.

“Most irregular and improper,” said that gentleman. “Pray excuse me” (to Arthur), “there is a woman in hysterics. I told Jenkins to empty the contents of the water-jug over her, and I have sent for a policeman. Now, Mr. Aubrey, I am at your service. You wish an immediate arrest, I presume? I congratulate you on the determination, sir; quite right, very proper indeed.”

And the grim and dyspeptic senior rubbed his hands.

“Stop,” said Arthur; “I understand that there is a person who—that woman, in fact—wishes to see me. I do not know why I should be denied to her without being consulted, Mr. Grinderby.”

“Have you mentioned to our client who the party is?” asked Grinderby, addressing his partner in a very emphatic manner.

“Well,” replied Mr. Cousens, “I don’t see how I could help it exactly. We can’t treat a gentleman like Mr. Aubrey as if he were a child. He asked me who it was, and I told him.”

“And he did quite right, Mr. Grinderby,” said Arthur, indignantly. “I shall see Mrs. Pettingall. I am not one to shrink like a coward from an unpleasant interview on this or any other occasion. Why should I not see her?”

The West-end partner whistled, and Mr. Grinderby gathered up his papers.

"It is contrary to my advice, my strongest exhortations, Mr. Aubrey," said the latter; "but I have no more to say. My belief is that you will yield to the solicitations and hypocritical whining of this woman, if you see her; therefore, we had better defer taking instructions for a prosecution until that event has taken place. In the mean time, perhaps you will excuse me for a few minutes."

And so saying, Mr. Grinderby bowed and left the room for his own particular den.

Aubrey walked up and down.

"Why should I not see this poor creature, victim of her husband's crime?" he said. "I am not a Minister of State to be denied thus; I am not Grand Lama of Thibet or Emperor of China, whose presence-chamber cannot be approached save by approved embassies. Why should I refuse, in the name of common courtesy and humanity, to see her?"

"You had better not," quoth Phil.

"Pray why?"

"Because," replied Phil, "you are such a devilish soft-hearted fellow, that if you do see her, you will never prosecute her infernal husband, that's all."

"You seem to think me very weak; but when I tell you that my mind is made up, and that nothing can shake it on that head, perhaps you will cease these very unpleasant remarks. I tell you frankly that I think Mr. Grinderby went unnecessarily a great deal too far."

"With the best intentions," said the other.

"As a legal adviser, probably yes," rejoined Aubrey; "but, even professionally, beyond the mark."

"It can't matter to us," said Mr. Cousens, "in a professional point of view. Of course *I* always speak and act as a friend into the bargain. Now, just do be advised, and let me send this wretched creature away."

"No, sir," was the reply; "Arthur Aubrey is not one to shrink from a scene, however painful, when he thinks his duty as a man and a Christian is involved."

"Then," said Phil, "I'll just tell the lady that a man and a Christian will see her—that is, if she is not already gone, as I rather think she is." So saying, Mr. Cousens left the room. "No such luck!" he said, with a grimace, on returning; "she has just come to. poor thing! They have wetted her bonnet-strings rarely, and there is a constable sitting by the stove ready to eject her if necessary."

"Upon my soul," said Arthur, "I think it perfectly brutal to send for one at all. Here is a poor creature come to plead for her husband, and you treat her like a felon! Let me see her at once, if she has come to see me; though I cannot let her husband escape the penalty of his ungrateful fraud, I may soften the blow to her, and perhaps do something to save her from starvation and the streets. Come, let me see her at once."

Mr. Cousens shrugged his shoulders, pocketed his gold toothpick, and led the way.

We will not ask our readers to witness the very

painful scene which took place, but will now peep into Grinderby's den. He sat writing for about a quarter of an hour, as if quite indifferent to Aubrey and all his belongings, at the expiration of which period Mr. Cousens walked in.

"Well?" said the senior.

The gentleman addressed laughed heartily, and sat down.

"Is it all right?" inquired Grinderby.

"As houses," was the response. Had it been any one else, he would have said "as a trivet," or "as nails;" but "houses" had a legal and substantial sound.

"He won't prosecute," quoth Grinderby.

"Not a bit of it," said Cousens; "neatly managed, I must say; very neat, indeed, sir."

"A prosecution in this case, Mr. Cousens, would not suit the firm."

"I don't think it would, precisely," replied the junior partner of that firm.

"This woman is worth a Jew's eye," said Grinderby. "She's none of your instructed and doctored sort. I thought she would have pulled my coat off this morning, as if I were an angel of mercy. Ha! ha!"

There was something so ludicrous in the notion of old Grinderby as an angel of mercy, that Phil's eyes were almost blood-shot when he recovered from a fit of laughter.

"It was exceedingly well contrived," continued Grinderby. "The thing was to get them accidentally thrown together, and to offer all the opposition we

could. I hope, Mr. Cousens, that your client is not offended by what I said. But do you feel certain of the effect? Are we not building too surely on his weakness?"

"A dinner at the Radnor!" cried Phil, "against the balance of the widow Tomkins's estate, after our costs are deducted. Here it is, seven pounds, seven shillings, and fourpence halfpenny, out of two hundred and ninety-two pounds, eleven shillings, and threepence."

"The balance, after all payments of debts, funeral expenses, and other liabilities whatsoever!" responded Grinderby.

"You are right, sir," rejoined Mr. Cousens, "as you generally are. Such is the amount which the firm will hand over to the widow at the latest possible date. Egad! I shouldn't wonder if she were sued for the cost of her mourning yet, before she receives it."

"I trust," said Grinderby, with dignity, "that you do not mean to impute undue delay or severity to the firm?"

"To the firm, yes," replied Phil, grinning; "but not to either of us. What a fine thing is this amalgamation of interests! As a member of the firm I protect your interests, when, otherwise, I should neglect my own. As a member of the firm, you do the same by me."

It is thus that a money-lender always knows a "party," who may be prevailed on to advance a sum at usurious interest. The "party" is the remorseless being who sues when the accommodation bill is "duly"

dishonoured. We have known "my friend," who does the needful, actually abused by one of the fraternity, for asking more than sixty per cent., and for issuing a double writ with more than usual promptitude. "'Pon honour, it's too bad," says such a one. "I tell my friend he's too greedy; but what's to be done?" And he afterwards laments the remorselessness of his "friend" in selling up the borrower's furniture without an hour's delay, after his promissory note has become due, under a bill of sale. Nay, he will go through the form of promising to remonstrate with him—"upon his soul he will"—and does it without the slightest success!

Grinderby and Cousens understood each other, both collectively and individually, just as well as a money-lender estimates the avarice and vindictiveness of "his friend." About twenty minutes more elapsed before a clerk knocked at the door and informed Messrs. Grinderby and Cousens, that Mr. Aubrey had left the office, without expressing a wish to see either of them, after sending for a cab and placing Mrs. Pettingall and her children in it. The firm exchanged looks, and when the clerk had retired, it burst into a fit of laughter, which lasted some little time, the only difference between the respective cachinnation of its members being, that the senior partner indulged in a silent, and the junior in a loud style of laughter.

"I think you would have lost your bet, Mr. Grinderby," at length observed the sprightly Phil.

The only reply was conveyed by the medium of an exhaustive pinch of snuff.

"It's all serene," at length quoth Phil, with vast delight.

"I wish, Mr. Cousens," said Grinderby, "that you would not indulge in slang, at least during business hours. With your style of dress I have long ceased to interfere." And he regarded, with a slight elevation of his iron-grey brows, his partner's elegant boots, which that gentleman happened at the time to be gazing at with the most triumphant complacency. "But," added Grinderby, "I wish you could make it convenient to attend divine service at least once on the Sabbath. As a member of the firm, sir, you would find it greatly to your advantage; much more than by frequenting, as I have been pained to hear you still do, that disreputable resort of thieves and prostitutes, the Escorial, which is doing more to demoralise the middle and lower classes of this country than a dozen Haymarkets."

"I really think," answered Phil, "that the firm has nothing to do with my private life and pursuits; and as for church, I should like to know who is the spy upon my conduct on Sundays."

"The firm, sir," replied Grinderby, "requires that you should at least preserve the common decencies of life; and let me tell you, that attendance at church has its commercial as well as its heavenly aspects. Oh, Mr. Cousens, think of your immortal soul! Spare a little time to put in an appearance in the Court of Common—I mean, of Divine Justice. That inestimable woman, Mrs. Grinderby, has long lamented your heathenism to me. 'Depend upon it, Mr. G.,' were her words this very morning, 'the young man can never prosper who neglects his pew as Mr.

Cousens does.' Why, sir," continued Grinderby, with animation, "I don't believe you have looked into the inside of your hat these twelve months, save to identify it in a worldly point of view at some carnal rout or party. 'Tis awful to neglect your Maker thus."

So saying, Mr. Grinderby looked up at a spider's web on the ceiling above him, with an air that would have been creditable to Exeter Hall at a May meeting. Phil muttered something in reference to the maker's name in his hat, which it is prudent to suppress in these pages.

"It's all very well," he said, rather impatiently, "for you to find fault with my occasional amusements, but where would be our West-end connexion without them? Look at the little accommodation business for Lord Ernest Albany in the Burlington. Why the firm will make, let me see, nine hundred and fifty pounds by that affair alone."

"Yes," said Grinderby, "but it was very near losing the whole of the capital advanced."

"We stood to lose a hundred and twenty-five pounds," replied Phil, "and we clear nine hundred and fifty. It is not *quite* a thousand per cent., but it might have been if you would have advanced more; and all this is owing to my visits to the Cave and the Escorial, which you are pleased to speak of so disparagingly. Every man to his taste, and if I like a little harmless indulgence better than"—"canting" he was about to say, but checked himself and said: "better than religious restriction, I don't think the firm has much to complain of, that's all."

Had Mr. Grinderby been in other company, he

would probably, so fond was he of the phrase, have indulged in a blasphemous allusion, after the fashion of a celebrated preacher, to a "firm" above, of whom Phil took no cognisance whatsoever. There is awful blasphemy to be heard in our streets, on our railways, on our steam-boats, and in our rural districts. A man bred in London may boast with a kind of pride that he has heard the worst of everything. He is mistaken, if his sense of hearing has not experienced the cacology of a provincial village—some "Sweet Auburn" of the period. But all the imprecations of the ignorant and debased are as nothing, if not flavoured with the hypocritical leaven. The coarsest swearing is meaningless, compared with the tropes and figures of the falsely devout.

Mr. Grinderby did not think fit to pursue the subject of religion any further that day. Whenever very successful, he became proportionately pious on the occasion; when he lost, his piety suffered. So great a hypocrite was Grinderby, that a sufficient amount of prosperity might have prevented his vicious nature from ever cropping up to the surface. We think it might have ended in his deceiving even himself.

"So you think, then, it is all right," he resumed to his partner, after a pause, "and that this foolish profligate client of ours will not prosecute Pettingall?"

"I don't think anything about it," was the reply of that *jeune élégant*. "What do you imagine he has gone away for, without seeing either of us?"

"It would have been very awkward and detrimental to that firm, had he determined to proceed to ex-

tremities ; there is such a prejudice against our profession. We should have been made answerable for all our client's follies and weaknesses. Then, too, the affair of Swindles Manvers might have been told in a manner very injurious to the firm."

"It might," said Phil, whistling half a bar of one of his favourite airs. "And I don't see how we could have got out of it either."

"There was the sale of Bingley's Wharf, and the disposal of the business by that rascal Pettingall," rejoined Grinderby, reflectively ; "and we did not make so much out of either, as we ought to have done. That was your doing, Mr. Cousens."

"I admit," said Phil, "that we were slightly done there. But, excuse me, that was owing to your scruples—timidity, I should say."

"I tell you what, Mr. Cousens, it does not do to be enterprising without prudence in this world. You would soon have got the firm into a 'mess. What I say is, that you did not sufficiently protect our client's interests at first, so as to secure a fitting compensation for the manner in which the firm showed itself disposed to listen to sense and reason. And I must say, for my part, that my feelings were most conscientiously enlisted on the behalf of the purchasers. When I tell you, sir, that Mr. Thompson, the manager of the new concern, and the executive purchaser of the property, is one of the most regular of our congregation, and a worthy member of the Peckham Branch of the Pious Pilgrims of the New Redemption, I think you must admit that I could conscientiously make some sacrifice on his behalf of the worldly in-

terests of so prodigal and ungodly a reprobate as this Arthur Aubrey."

"But he ought to have paid more for it as a Christian," suggested Cousens.

"Perhaps so. Yes, I think that full justice was not done to the firm," said Grinderby. "When the unrighteous are given into our hands for a spoil, there should be no sparing. It would steady your hand greatly, Mr. Cousens, were you to become a member of our church, and cement the interests of the firm in a remarkable degree. But," he added, in a lower tone, "it is given to our hands to work with strange instruments, and we must not question the ways of Heaven. Is the *ca. sa.* out in Duplex *v.* Singleton?"

"It is, this morning," was the reply.

"We must see Pettingall after this, and get him to sign a paper, which will place him at the mercy of the firm, without apprising our client."

"He is to be manager of the new Company," observed Cousens; "and I shall manage so that he pays back a small sum to our client, with which we will credit him in costs, which will prevent Aubrey from ever taking advantage of his discovery. It will be a compromise of felony. Ha! ha! I shall say that he is repentant, and has sold up everything to enable him to offer this small amount towards replacing the sums he has abstracted. When did you last hear of Swindles Manvers?" asked Cousens, carelessly.

The brow of Grinderby grew black, and for a moment abstracted.

"He sailed for the United States last week. Why do you ask?"

“Oh!” said Cousens, “I heard that he had changed his name, and been engaged in some very desperate undertakings. I was told that he had even been supposed to be implicated in that dreadful murder of a jeweller in York, and that the officers are after him.”

“Nonsense!” said Grinderby. “Not a word of truth in it. Manvers is not such a fool as that comes to. He has done quite enough to make citizenship in a new and enterprising country more advantageous for him, than stopping here to annoy us. I am very glad he is gone; and I trust, at any rate, he has done enough to make his return here a most remote contingency.”

“So do I,” said Cousens. “I never could make out precisely what you had to do with him; seeing that the firm was out of all the transactions between him and our client.”

“Why, you see,” said Grinderby, “the fellow introduced himself to me, and gave me considerably more insight into our client’s affairs than I could have easily obtained elsewhere. But he is not likely to trouble us any more.” After a pause he continued: “I wish you would go to church sometimes, if only occasionally, Mr. Cousens. You might then go to the Escorial or anywhere else, twice as often, without half so much danger to your reputation.”

What answer Mr. Cousens might have made to this recurrent allusion to one of his favourite haunts will never be recorded; since a clerk knocked at the door and presented a slip of paper, on which was written the name of the firm’s devoted client and victim, Mr. Arthur Aubrey.

"Say that we are particularly engaged with a City client, Mr. Snap," said Grinderby, "and will see him in ten minutes."

Mr. Snap evinced no surprise at these instructions, and did as he was told. For about a quarter of an hour the pair were occupied, one in reading a newspaper, and the other in writing letters. Mr. Grinderby then rose and slammed the side-door with some vehemence, after which he touched a hand-bell, which act was duly followed by the appearance of Mr. Snap.

"Show Mr. Aubrey in," said Grinderby.

"I have come to tell you," said that gentleman, somewhat abruptly, "that I have changed my mind. It is not my intention to prosecute Mr. Pettingall. I know all you would say" (to Grinderby, who smiled harshly and contemptuously, like a gleam of November sunshine in the chambers where he practised), "but you must allow me to be the best judge of my own affairs" (a bow and a shrug from Grinderby), "Of course," he added rapidly and pleasantly, "you are acting quite rightly as my legal advisers in urging me to prosecute. I should do the same if I were in your place; but it does not suit me. I don't like the trouble; and I hate to be bored by a confounded lot of snivelling." Mr. Aubrey finished his sentence, with an affectation of impatience and anger which he did not feel. The truth is, he had been deeply moved by the entreaties of Mrs. Pettingall, upon whom the discovery of her husband's dishonesty had burst with overwhelming effect. "What a pity," resumed Aubrey, "that these scoundrels will marry

and have children like other men. She gave him an excellent character as a father and husband."

Grinderby knew that Pettingall beat his wife, and, what is still worse in a woman's eyes, neglected her; but he said nothing, and did not even smile. How strange a thing it is that scamps and heartless profligates are generally so much more faithfully served, and even passionately loved, by the women whom they have once deceived, than good men. There are women who esteem sterling qualities; but their love is generally subservient to their reason. There is no romance in *their* affections. Poor Mrs. Pettingall! although her brutal husband escaped punishment, and became a wealthy and prosperous man, she never recovered the shock and dread which his criminal conduct, and its detection by Aubrey, occasioned her. She became, as we shall have occasion to narrate hereafter, a confirmed lunatic.

Pettingall was always very pathetic in alluding to his "affliction," as he called it, to his friends and acquaintances in after life; and talked of the heavy expenses which it entailed upon him, just as if the poor lady had been confined in a private lunatic asylum regardless of cost. As his weight increased and his cheeks became fatter, the expression of his grief became gradually more difficult to convey, until it became so completely conventional, that those who knew him treated his sad communications as they would do a mere British barometrical remark of commonplace salutation. He would roll a duly lubricated cigar between his commercial thumb and finger and speak of "my sad burden, you know," with an

indifference that bordered on satisfaction. As he set up a snuff-box about the same time that his domestic calamity befel him, the habit of recurring to the two—i.e., grief and box—became inseparable. In this there was some aptitude, as the shop-sweepings in his favourite mixture imparted a moisture to his eyes, which was extremely proper and edifying under the circumstances.

“May I ask,” said Mr. Grinderby after a pause, during which Phil had attempted at least three airs out of the “Sonnambula,” and three times recalled himself to a sense of propriety and partnership in the firm—“may I ask if there is any proposal on the part of this repentant family to restore any portion of the proceeds of their embezzlement? You are aware, I suppose, that Pettingall has a collection of pictures and some expensive furniture for a man in his position?”

“Really,” said Aubrey, “I did not think of that; but if I could recover something I should have no objection. My expenses have lately been somewhat heavy, I can assure you, and I fancy I have lost some thousands by this man.”

“You had better not appear in the matter yourself,” observed Phil. “If you like to place it in our hands, and authorise us to act for you, we will see what amount can be recovered. It is a matter which will require great firmness and caution. I should think Pettingall would cut up for at least five hundred pounds, with the aid of a little adroit menace and the broker. I would not leave the scoundrel a bed to lie on, nor a table on which to write.”

"Nay," said Arthur, "you must leave the poor woman and her children their bits of things."

"Ha, ha!" quoth Phil, arranging his collar as if before an invisible glass; "I wonder how many babies' cribs it would take, under the appraiser, to pay for a pound of Beckington's best brand of regalias?"

"Good Heavens, what a notion!" said his client. "No, no, I will not have any such barbarity."

"Perhaps," observed Mr. Grinderby, with provoking calmness, "Mr. Aubrey considers a gallery full of paintings essential to the domestic comfort of the helpmate of a dishonest clerk——"

"By no means," interrupted Aubrey. "I wish only to be guided by the commonest dictates of humanity."

"If," returned the elder lawyer, "Mr. Aubrey will be kind enough to favour us with his instructions, I will see them carefully carried out. Suppose that we leave the houseful of furniture to the wife, and sufficient money for the purposes of emigration—say, one hundred or one hundred and fifty pounds. Of course," he said, "Mr. Pettingall is not likely to get another berth in this country, without a recommendation for honesty; and that at least you cannot give him?"

"Not exactly," replied Aubrey. "I think," he added, "your present view of the case is alike sensible and humane; and I give you full credit for your suggestion, and liberty to act in my name."

The lawyer hastily wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper, and handed it to Mr. Aubrey, who at once

affixed his signature and handed it back. It simply empowered Messrs. Grinderby and Cousens to settle all business relations between their client and Mr. Pettingall; and to discharge the latter from his employment, on such conditions as should seem desirable and expedient. This done, the trio separated. Aubrey went home to dinner, and to impart to his gentle wife the merciful course he had adopted, certain of an ample reward from her beautiful eyes and lips; and Phil Cousens betook himself to his hair-dresser, and thence to a little banquet for four in the Haymarket; after which he contemplated visiting a music-hall in order to witness a daring performance on the trapèze, for which the coarse and brutal proprietors deserved an indictment at the sessions, instead of a "champagne notice" in the newspapers, and the renewal of their license to deprave and poison the British public, while smaller ruffians only—reversing the physical order of things—stuck in the obstructive meshes of the magisterial net.

CHAPTER XIV.

WEASEL AND STOAT.

You think I was too trenchant. You know not
 The sort of stuff I dealt with. You may beat,
 Pound it with blows, yet still it is the same ;
 And where you dint it, doth alone bulge out
 In other part, and show its metal still.
 He will but kick his dog, or strike a girl,
 Some wretched creature to his humours chained,
 To be revenged on us.

THAT evening saw Grinderby and Pettingall wonderfully confidential together over a bottle of the identical port wine which Manvers had recognised as a sample of the 1820, bottled by the late Mr. Aubrey, who little thought, poor man ! what throats it would moisten, or it may be imagined he would have hesitated before laying it down. The old man was hard, but honest. He was one of the last of the type of the old English merchant, whose word was as good as his bond. Such is often still the case ; but then it happens often that both are valueless. A brisk trade too frequently means now a successful fraud. The only period of honesty now is whilst a name is being built up ; upon which to cheat well and widely. The greater the name now, the more apprehensive we have reason to be of the extent of the impending crash.

One shoulders unconvicted felons at every turn of the commercial mart, and England (not France) has become one great gambling-table, where Credit presides as croupier, and the boldest and cleverest black-legs win the largest prizes and the most frequent stakes.

Mr. Grinderby was an acute and subtle angler; but he was not displaying his piscatorial powers on the occasion of his interview with Mr. Pettingall. He was merely applying the screw; or, to adopt a more convivial figure in honour of that tête-à-tête symposium, the lemon-squeezing process, and very sour and elongated did Pettingall's visage become during the operation. If our readers could imagine a successful thief falling into the clutches of a more powerful old bandit, and arguing over the appropriation of the plunder, he will have some idea of the transaction. His first fright being over, soon after the return of his wife, the delinquent clerk had rushed into an extreme of self-gratulation. When Grinderby called, he was positively in an exultant state. If Aubrey had foregone the prosecution, what else could he do? Pettingall had no less a sum than three thousand pounds very advantageously invested. He was confident that his managership and secretaryship of the "New United Shippers and Barge-owners' Association Company, Limited," built on the secret and dishonest transfer of his late employer's business, would be secured to him; for if not, he was in a position not only to upset the sale of Bingley's Wharf, but to reveal the whole conspiracy by which the business was secured to the Company. His detection by Aubrey fell on him like a thunderbolt. For eight-

and-forty hours he had been on the point of realising his securities, and proceeding to Sweden or the United States. But he had counted with desperate assurance in no little degree on the weakness and good nature of Arthur Aubrey, and the connivance of his legal advisers; and the result showed he was not mistaken. But now here was old Grinderby, armed with plenipotential powers, which the latter took care to inform him extended from compromise to prosecution; and the old lawyer, with the most friendly manner of which he was capable, while shutting one eye to look through a glassful of the ruby juice of the grape, and fixing the other with its cold spectacled glare upon the guilty wretch with a patent corkscrew power of extraction, stated that he would have no less a sum of money than twelve hundred and fifty pounds from him as the price of escape from transportation. Nor would Grinderby bate one penny of his demand.

"I am sorry," he said, dryly, "if you have not got the money; but with good conduct and your abilities you will soon get a ticket-of-leave, and smart accountants are highly prized in a country of such wonderful commercial expansion as Australia. How ever will you manage without smoking, after committal? 'They don't allow it in Newgate, you know. You must have robbed your employer very clumsily, not to have acquired more than double the sum I have mentioned. And I fear the new Company has been sadly ungrateful. By-the-bye, what is the salary to be affixed to your new position? I trust it is sufficient to secure your future integrity."

In vain did Pettingall writhe and quiver under the merciless chaff of his grim interrogator. In vain did he declare that he had not the amount named, or half of it, in the world; and that he could not raise it, if he sold off everything, including the pictures.

"The more fool you," was the only response. "How could you sacrifice your integrity" (dwelling on the word) "for so small a consideration?"

Pettingall ventured to mutter something about "unfortunate speculations."

"What! with your employer's money—how doubly rash," was the only answer. "Look you, if this were true," he resumed, "and not an infernal lie, as I know it to be, I would spend money to add five years to your term of penal servitude. I would not be disappointed by your folly, any more than I will be bilked by your rascality. Look here, business is over, and I have no objection to another bottle; but by——" (here the old hypocrite swore a dreadful oath), "if you don't shell out before I have done with you to-night, and I don't mean to lose the last omnibus to Peckham, I'll give you fifteen years, as sure as my name is Grinderby."

Pettingall groaned, as he felt himself nailed to this species of mock auction, at which he so unwillingly sought to bid for freedom from the consequences of his crime and ingratitude. But he did bid, and with every glass of wine swallowed respectively by the unequal pair over their unholy negotiation, the market rose gradually but surely. The wine, which made Grinderby the fiercer and firmer, and more sarcastic, only flustered the weaker instrument in the plunder

of their respective client and employer. By the time Pettingall had risen to eleven hundred pounds, and was fairly blubbering over his pretended incapacity to give more, the second bottle was finished; and Grinderby pulled out his massive watch and held it towards the failing lamp. He then replaced it in his fob, under the capacious flaps of his long grey vest, and buttoned his coat and great-coat deliberately over it.

"Time's up," was all he vouchsafed to say. "We shall meet next in Newgate."

An eccentric fancy skipped into Pettingall's half-muddled brain, and took such firm hold there that he could not shake it off. As he stood irresolutely gazing with his red and fishy eyes at the movements of Grinderby, he thought how he should like to be a small street boy of the predatorial class, and butt with his head full at the portly stomach of the irritating old lawyer, and tug at the seals and ribbon of that monstrous turnip of a watch. The idea possessed him so strongly that he burst into a convulsive fit of laughter, mingled with sobbing, which Grinderby took to be hysterical; and, in consequence, very nearly relaxed his determination, and was on the point of taking the eleven hundred pounds, thinking that Pettingall had really stated nearly the truth of the case, when the latter, mistaking the lawyer's involuntary motion for the final signal of his departure, suddenly gasped out:

"I'll do it, Mr. Grinderby—I'll do it, though I have to sell these spoons."

If Grinderby smiled, it was internally; for he evinced not the slightest surprise or emotion as he

quietly unrolled his comforter, and stepped out of his great-coat again.

"No time like the present, Mr. Pettingall," he said, in a brisk tone. "I congratulate you on your resolution. Of course," he continued, "I must have the money to-night. Got it, I dare say, up-stairs? Oh! I nearly forgot to say that our firm must do the business of the new Company. I dare say, however, that has already occurred to you."

"Indeed," muttered Pettingall, "it is impossible. Our Mr. Thompson has already got his son-in-law in. Besides, it would not be worth your while. There would not be a chance of anything but regular business."

"That is precisely what our firm wishes," said Grinderby. "You need not be in the least afraid. We want a City connexion; and, besides, we only put the screw on our poorer clients, and fools like this Aubrey. I tell you, it will pay us to do the Company's business well and cheaply—I may say on the square. Remember, I have set my mind on this business, and will have it; or you may keep your paltry twelve hundred and fifty pounds."

"I promise you to do my best," said Pettingall; "but if I can't do it, I can't."

"Well, well," replied Grinderby, "I shall only pledge you to act under my instructions, and I have no fear of the result; but as the other business must be ended here, and the money paid, and the papers signed and delivered, you must do me the favour to give me the best pledge you can."

And he accordingly dictated an oath to the un-

resisting clerk of a nature to make the hair of an unsophisticated person stand on end with affright.

He then produced a sort of release in blank, which he filled up with the respective names of his client and the guilty clerk, and inserted the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds as the consideration money, which caused the heart of the perplexed Pettingall to bound and palpitate with momentary astonishment and delight. He was soon, however, disenchanted.

"The thousand pounds," said Grinderby, "I will, if you please, appropriate for the firm."

We need scarcely say that this partook of the nature of a species of legal fiction, as the accomplished Phil Cousens touched only a moiety of two hundred and fifty pounds, which Grinderby assured him was all that his utmost diplomacy could extract out of Pettingall. The battle had to be fought over again about the production of the consideration money—we do not mean Mr. Aubrey's share. For that, his legal adviser was perfectly content with a promissory note payable on demand. Not so with the thousand pounds. The matter was, however, finally settled by the production of nearly six hundred pounds in notes and gold, which Pettingall kept, as Grinderby had shrewdly suspected, in case of a sudden emergency, and the deposit of securities and shares representing eight hundred pounds incerta in flourishing Companies of the period, it being understood that these were to be restored the next day, on payment of the remaining amount.

"Now," said Mr. Grinderby, after duly reinvesting himself in his outer garments, "I have only just one

more word to say—it is one of caution for your sake. This document will remain with me, and it will not be my interest to destroy it. As long as it remains in existence you will be safe, at any rate, from any punishment which my client can demand or exact. It will never be for my interest that this affair should see even a partial glimpse of light. I will be frank and candid. It might injure the firm, were it to do so. But if you know enough to breathe suspicion or scandal upon us, we, on our part, have it in our power to ruin you, position, prospects, and character. Be advised by me. Be silent and keep square. You have sufficient temptation to act honestly in future; and the richer and more respectable you grow, the greater stake you will have in keeping things dark, and acquiring a character for trustworthiness. You have had a narrow squeak, Master Pettingall, and have been let off very cheaply, take my word for it.”

With this, Mr. Grinderby put his hat and gloves on with the deliberation of a family doctor at a funeral, and went out into the bright, calm moonlight shining on St. Saviour’s Church, Southwark, with the air of a philosopher conscious of performing a charitable act. And in some such light no doubt he regarded it. Does any one imagine that honesty and dishonesty are always read by the same lantern, be it that of Christian faith or heathen discovery?

That night Mr. Grinderby did not find his way to Peckham. The last ’bus had been gone nearly forty minutes. True, he might have taken a cab, and he did; but the driver must have misunderstood his

directions, for he drove in exactly an opposite direction. When the firm was unusually busy, either in or out of term time, Mr. Grinderby often slept at the office. There was the old laundress to attest it, and a bed which the late Duke of Wellington might have approved for shape and hardness. But about three hours later some one very like the senior partner of the firm of Grinderby and Cousens might have been discovered, by the interposition of a new "Devil on Two Sticks," getting much the worst of it in a drunken scuffle with a lady of considerable personal attractions, but of haughty and resolute mien, flushed with bacchanalian indulgence, in an elegantly furnished cottage in the Grove of the Evangelist, N.W. The supper-cloth covered a portion of the floor instead of the table, and the remains of a lobster-salad ornamented the hearth-rug with an additional raised pattern. So earnest had the lady shown herself in her desire to possess a token of the old lawyer's affection, that a lock of his grey hair was twined round and among the diamond rings that sparkled on her taper fingers.

"You old wretch," she said, "I'll teach you to look at another woman, that I will."

Was this person jealous, then, of our respectable elder of the New Branch of Deliverance at Peckham? We must profess ourselves unwilling to doubt a lady's word. All we know is, that when she wanted anything which her protector was unwilling to give, she invariably imputed to him some act of gallantry, which she proceeded to avenge on the spot. As these encounters always ended with a maudlin reconcilia-

tion, the coveted present invariably followed as a matter of course.

That very night, at the same hour, did Mr. Pettingall, after his third glass of brandy-and-water, put the lighted end of his cigar into his fish-like mouth, just before staggering into his bedroom to seek the slumbers of which he stood in need. It was remarkable that whereas in his cups Grinderby's legs always failed him long before his head, Pettingall acquired an increased bodily vigour from drunkenness, but very soon lost his head. On this occasion, furious with rage, and boiling over with anger against his tormentor and plunderer, Grinderby, he ordered his pale and trembling wife out of bed, and—must we write it?—beat, ay, and kicked, her unmercifully. The poor creature crept away to a sofa, weeping as if her heart would break. That night a vessel broke on her overtaxed and tortured brain; but it was not until the second day after, so inattentive to her condition was Pettingall in his sullen and morose mood of baffled greed and impotent vindictiveness, that he discovered the condition into which his combined guilt and brutality had driven the unhappy lady whom he had sworn to protect and cherish. The first half-hour that some little domestic necessity caused him to direct his attention in a less resentful temper to his wife, he found her a moping maniac, from which state the doctors held out not the slightest chance that she would ever recover.

CHAPTER XV.

A TILT IN THE ESCURIAL.

Dame Fortune, witch-like, oft in cruel spite
 Drops a chance brick on head of blameless wight ;
 Or hits a pensive student in the eye,
 Whose wandering feet some brawling crowd draw nigh.
 His "friends" for comfort in his worst despair,
 Look wondrous sly, and ask—How came he there?
Inelegant Extracts, vol. vii.

Serves you right for being unlucky.
Ourselves.

WE must now return to the elegant and accomplished Mr. Philip Cousens, with his patent boots and easy off-hand style. He proceeded that evening, as we have above narrated, to his favourite haunt, the Escurial, a gorgeous music-hall, consecrated also to Terpsichore, where Young England, and too often, to its shame be it said, Old England, delighted to congregate and unbend ; there the "delighted spirit" of Phil Cousens bathed itself in a congenial flood of youthful cynicism and slang ; there he and his male companion in the little dinner for four, which we alluded to in our last chapter but one, mingled their empty heads with those of scores and hundreds of

other "pleasure"-seekers, floating, cork-like, upon the ocean of snobbism around. It was an ocean whose deity might easily have been pictured to the imagination, rising in an apotheosis of tobacco-smoke, in the likeness of a bleary, leary old "gent," with the beard of a Silenus and the hoofs and horns of a goat. The transformed genius of Britain, too, what should she resemble? No longer the Minerva-like, the chastely and severely beautiful goddess, to whom fancy once lent a form; not the Britannia of heroic Old England, but a Britannia Theatre impersonation in pink "tights," or a lightly-attired coryphée of the Escorial itself, an example of the studied attractions of the place, with saucer-like muslin skirt, "four inches shorter, sir, than on any other boards in England, by ——," as the manager was wont to boast. Or shall we imagine a modern Britannia, in the person of the buxom lady in the striped dress with red high-heeled boots and little bells attached to them, who jumps about yelling her *double-entendres*, with her arms akimbo, to an enraptured audience; and then hops off the stage on one leg, the incarnation of brazen effrontery, a fish-fag in satin stays?

Look around you, curious and inquiring philosopher! Consider, respectable citizen of Great Britain! Is this scene a nightmare or a reality? We have abolished the cock-pit and the dog-pit, we no longer bait bears and bulls, the Ring is on its last legs, and the Turf has at least three rotten legs to one sound one, if it has one sound one left; while the legs of the noble steed threaten to become the last and

least requisites for success. But what is *this*? What means this crapulous assemblage, this saturnalia of villanous aspect, this crush of Jew and ill-looking foreigner, of thief and “swell,” of “gent” and “snob?” words of modern meaning and extraction; this seething vulgarity, these insolent looks, these depraved regards—whence comes that coarse and brutal laugh, that loud-voiced slang? Is this the reproduction of some lewd rites in vogue before the Flood, or is it suggestive, as it is provocative, of the fiery wrath to come?

Nonsense! away with such fancies, such absurdities. This is only the Escurial in its glory, a popular place of entertainment, highly patronised and greatly frequented in this refined and sentimental age.

We must narrate that Mr. Cousens and his friend had quitted their two friends of the dinner, before repairing to this place of chaste and elegant recreation; for providing which the spirited proprietors actually affect to consider themselves entitled to the gratitude of their fellow-countrymen. On that very afternoon a splendid service of plate had been presented to the chief caterer and manager by his admirers in recognition of what they were pleased to term his great energy, untiring enterprise, and generous devotion on the public behalf. This meant the engagement of one of the largest troupes of dancers ever collected in Paris, and causing them to wear a less amount of clothing than had ever been known before, during the performance of a series of voluptuous gymnastics called by courtesy dancing, which

had led to the deaths of half a dozen or so through cold and consumption, and nightly threatened the lives of several more. It included a more thrilling and perilous series of feats upon certain ropes and bars affixed to the roof of the building than had ever been previously attempted, which was greatly enhanced in interest by the fact that a fall would in all probability have insured the sensational deaths of one or more of the spectators below. It included a covered refuge for a large body of French and English courtesans lately driven from their wonted open-air beat by the severity of a magisterial Lord Angelo, and by the cruelty of a police force, which enjoyed the reputation of being rather more brutal and demoralised than any section of the criminal population of the metropolis, whom they were supposed to keep in check. It included the opening of certain beer and wine cellars below, where persons of known immorality and the "nobility" generally—which would seem to comprise a great many ill-favoured foreigners, and a considerable portion of the lost tribes of Israel, which seemed to have turned up for the occasion—were at liberty to congregate; and to sit, stand, smoke, drink, or converse with such ladies of the ballet as chose between the acts of the dazzling scenes on the stage to come down and sit, stand, drink, smoke, and converse with them in this engaging Pandemonium of paint, sawdust, oil, stench, beer-barrels, and seedy, squalid waiters, below. This was the cynosure of raw swells and vicious clerks and shopmen, the charming retreat of the capitalist of panics, of the "limited liability" promoter, the fast

stockbroker, the "lord" of protested cheques and dishonoured bills, the dishonest director, and the financial M.P. Nor let us leave out of the enterprise the engagement of a lady contortionist with her husband, said to be Moldo-Wallachian, and who may have been, if there is a quarter so called in White-chapel; and of a staff of comic singers, whom the bills and posters of their astonishing qualifications could alone adequately describe. There was a stoutish lady with ample skirts, clocked silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes, who danced and sang, and did what is technically called a "break-down" with such a genial overflow of vulgarity, that the reciprocal raptures of delighted gentism were fully awakened. The yells and howls of applause nightly elicited by this lady from the seated portion of the audience, who drank in every word and gesture, and who belonged to the respectable class of the Escurials—in so far that every female was not of necessity a woman of the town, and every youth or man not absolutely and unmistakably in search of *Cythera communis*—the yells and howls of delight, we say, at the songs and capers of this lady, were something at once deafening to the ear and gratifying to art. Then there was the "great" Smith, the "greater" Jones, and the "greatest" comic singer in the world, the "stunning" Robinson, whom the youth of England were there taught to venerate, to imitate, and to admire. Such were some of the claims which the illustrious manager, the patriotic and the philanthropic Slimy Cash, Esq., put forth to receive the silver tea-service in particular, and the gratitude of

the British nation in general. This great man was that evening at the perihelion of his well-earned glory and substantial success. Had not a select party from the House of Commons visited the Escorial, and even inspected the *sacra penetralia* below? True, these were swept and garnished for the occasion, a select party of the ballet only was formally introduced, and cautioned to behave with a bewitching modesty of demeanour which

Might well have fired old Saturn;

an unexceptional collation was prepared, and the wines and liqueurs were of the best. Above all, the whole rout of common roysterers were excluded, and not one of the Hebrew fraternity to be seen—not even Isaac of York himself could have gained admission by anything short of a princely introduction that night. The senatorial party pronounced, as they had a right to do, the arrangements and the conduct of the whole establishment to be faultless. Only an Irish member showed some little discontent at not having an opportunity of pushing his researches as to the morality of the ballet a little further than perhaps the occasion warranted. But the ardour of legislative inquiry was doubtless fired beyond the bounds of frigid conventionality by the severe test which, in the strict exercise of duty, he subjected the quality of the supposed Escorial champagne. This little episode was, however, amply atoned for by the parting benediction bestowed on the smiling Slimy Cash by the chairman of the Committee himself, who was pleased to say that he

had never passed a more agreeable evening in the exercise of his parliamentary duties during a period of thirty years. Moreover, after the stage machinery had been examined and explained, did not the afore-said grave and reverend chairman himself, a distinguished and advanced Liberal and Reformer, shake hands with the enraptured Slimy, and compliment him on being one of the pioneers of the improvement and civilisation of the age? The last attempt at remonstrance on behalf of the legitimate drama was very shortly disposed of by the said enlightened chairman, when inflicting in the person of one of its most honoured interpreters an insult so coarse and brutal before a Committee of the House of Commons, that the excited and sensitive artist took to his bed for a whole fortnight in consequence thereof. The result of all this was that the Escorial was in full swing and riot ; the police were squared in a manner most agreeable to their feelings ; the stipendiary magistrates lent the weight of their decisions and influence to the side of success ; and Slimy Cash, Esq., and his coadjutors were on the high road to fortune, retirement from business, the respectability which is ever the handmaid of realised wealth, ancestral halls, and deer-parks in Surrey or elsewhere ; and, lastly, seats in the Senate of a venal and admiring nation.

Was it to be wondered that Slimy Cash, Esq., was in excellent trim and spirits that night? He who did all this, and only in return charged his fellow-citizens one shilling each admission ; and nothing, as some said, to a large portion of the female

acolytes to this temple of the three most charming of the nine muses in Apollo's train; he who had that day been feasted at a sumptuous banquet at the Crystal Palace, and presented with a splendid testimonial, in words which would appear in all the next day's papers without the expense of payment as an advertisement; he who had freely imbibed wines which he knew to be not his own, and, therefore, to be trusted in a sanitary point of view, as not likely to result in utter prostration the next morning, was—who can wonder at it?—in the seventh heaven of delight smoking a presentation cigar in his own especial Pandemonium. That evening his very imprecations were softened; and the only Peri of the ballet whose eyes and limbs he had consigned even to a worse place than the Escorial, had remarked to a lady friend, that he had done it quite mild-like, and even good-naturedly for him. Had the wretched acrobat, hanging that night by his great toes from the ceiling in the immediate vicinity of the chandelier, fallen upon the managerial head, graced as it was with ambrosial curls, and crushed the great Cash into a shapeless lump of clay, and stopped all the sordid calculations of his brain, and left him only distinguishable from any other wiped-out nonentity, by the glittering gewgaw on his dirty hand, which, somehow or other, no amount of soap and water ever seemed able to clean, and by the Californian massiveness of his well-known Albert chain, there is no doubt but that the world would have been the gainer, whilst he would have died a superlatively happy man. Alas! the Nemesis which followed in his footsteps that night

was but a small and limited expression of the wrath which the atrocious vulgarity and hollow abomination of his success had created in the bosoms of the Fates and Furies, who, for some wise reason or other, delayed to snip the vital ropes of his own particular trapèze and let the wretch down with a run!

The vengeance which the Fates meditated that eventful evening was of the smallest and the paltriest kind. A puny little wandering Nemesis, bent on mortal mischief, had, as we have recorded, drawn thither, by some invisible string, the elegant Phil Cousens and his companion at that particular time. Phil himself was, as he said, disgustingly sober, but his companion was in the first stage of Circean enchantment. He had already drunk the blood of the monkey, and a single glass of the Escurial brandy initiated him into the lion stage. In this state he dragged Phil with him to the door leading to the underground department, which we have endeavoured to describe. Unfortunately for Phil, who, it must be owned, wanted to shake his friend off, and had no desire to make the descent which immortalised the tuneful Orpheus in such dangerous companionship—much as he coveted admission alone—unfortunately, we say, for Phil, and for an innocent and harmless personage who had entered the Escurial from mere curiosity, in total ignorance of the habits of the place, and who was altogether a cleanly and domestic gentleman of high culture and moral worth, the guardian of the sacred retreat objected to the tipsy deportment of the elegant Mr. Cousens's friend. The fact is, that the management, inflated by success, had lately grown

very particular in their instructions to the "officers" of the establishment; so an altercation took place, during which Phil and the stranger stood passively inside the forbidden door.

"Come, come," said Mr. Cousens, pulling at his friend's coat-tail, "this won't do. Don't kick up a row, or we shall get into trouble."

And he endeavoured to persuade his friend, whose leonine state of drunkenness was fast developing itself, to retrace his steps. But the "trouble" came sooner than Phil expected. For, behold! the pottering little Nemesis we have spoken of directed thither the haughty steps of no less a person than the great Slimy Cash himself, who at that moment felt himself a potentate worthy of taking his place in a parterre of kings.

"Here is Mr. Slimy Cash," quoth the door-keeper; "you had better ask him."

Upon which Phil's friend took the advice of Cerberus, and rather roughly addressed the monarch in his own Escorial, urging his claims to admission.

"Just be off, will you?" was the response; "you have no right here. We only admit gentlemen to the 'cellars,' and them, too, as we know."

"I tell you I have been down a dozen times before," urged Mr. Cousens's friend.

"And I tell you, you're a liar," was the uncourteous rejoinder.

The answer was an extension, by the action of the biceps muscle, of the right arm of Phil's friend in a longitudinal direction, and also in the direction of Mr. Slimy Cash's inflamed visage. This is the way

we lately saw a blow described in the epistolary correspondence between two duellists in a French newspaper. Another and another similar extension succeeded, followed by the extension of the great man on his own boards in an extremely bruised and bleeding condition. But retaliation quickly followed. Half a dozen tall fellows in a kind of police uniform, a portion of the army of the Escurial, quickly appeared upon the scene. And oh! that we should relate such injustice—not only was the unoffending Phil soundly thrashed and pommelled, and ejected by a kick, as with the force of a catapult, from the premises, with a couple of black eyes added to his sum of suffering and indignity, and his watch, chain, studs, and shirt-front subtracted from his worldly goods; but the mild and amiable stranger, who at a little distance stood quietly smoking and ruminating on this, to him, strange and incomprehensible scene, was suddenly pinioned by one hired bully, whilst another ruffian planted a succession of shoulder-hits on his handsome and expressive face, which was literally held up to the blows of his assailant, who had been an unsuccessful, because currish and cowardly, aspirant to the decaying honours of the Ring. Stupefied and covered with blood, the unfortunate gentleman was “rushed” along a dark and narrow back entry into the street, into which he was most ignominiously kicked by his brutal assailants. And there he lay, stunned and senseless, for a considerable time.

Phil Cousens and his friend suffered in one sense a still more degrading and protracted infliction. For

they were pushed, dragged, and carried, neck and heels, through the dense mob of blackguards and Cyprians who stood around and behind the seated portion of the audience and filled the passages and entrances of the place. The original cause of the brawl, Phil's friend, whose intoxication had now become complete—him, the special deity who watches over drunken men, preserved at least from abrasions and contusions, and landed hatless, it is true, but comparatively uninjured, in the street. There he offered "to fight any one for a season ticket to Exeter Hall—no, dash it, I mean Spurgeon's chapel. I'll fight any gentlemen present (hiccup) for a ticket to Spurgeon's chapel and a new hat—I want a new hat." A good-natured policeman put him in a cab. "Drive to Barnes'!" he shouted, meaning a night-house in the Haymarket. And to Barnes Common he was driven, having fallen asleep the moment the cab-door was shut.

Not so, as we have already recorded, with the sprightly and fascinating Phil. His own creditors would hardly have recognised him, as he was left panting and breathless by his ejectors, outside the building into which he had so lately entered on such excellent terms with himself and the world at large. A victim of assault and battery, with broken eye-glass and damaged optics, the crown of his hat knocked in, and studless as a nobleman whose entire stable has been unreservedly sold off, the first thought of Mr. Cousens was an action against the proprietors, with swinging damages; and the second, what sort of figure he should cut in Webb's Fields in the morning.

The image of Grinderby, severe and ironical, rose before his impaired vision, and sobered him to a correct estimate of the calamity which had overtaken him. He saw the impossibility of damages, and groaned not only in the spirit, but aloud. Then thoughts of opposing the license of the Escurial flashed across him, only to be banished as hopeless from his brain. Sadly and slowly did Phil pick himself up, and ruefully and mournfully did he hail a four-wheeled cab—he had not spirits for a Hansom, to betake himself to his third floor in Maddox-street, Regent-street—a sadder, but not a better man. There let us leave him to bath his face in cold water, and devise falsehoods of the most varied and ingenious description, which he dismissed successively as impotent to deceive Grinderby, cursing the Escurial and all connected with it, and vowing he would never enter such a low place again.

We must now return to the stranger, whom we have left lying stunned and unconscious in a dark, narrow, and unfrequented street at the back of the Escurial.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE COMPANIONSHIP, BUT NOT FOR EVIL.

Soe they twaine thoro' y^e foreste, honde in honde,
 Discoursing idlie both of see and londe,
 Of cloude and skye and rainebow, faery dreams
 Whiche gilde Hope's summit with delusive gleams,
 Of lordlie towre and fayrest chivalrie,
 Of tournamente and daunce and mysterie,
 Of Alcyonne-Star where white-robed seraphs sing
 Swete songes of rapture with bright folded wing—
 Went heedlesse thus of dragonne fierce, and snake,
 Of wolfe and lyon hidde in thornie brake,
 Withouten black suspycion, or intende;
 Mistrustinge nought, and eche with eche contente.
 He deemed hyr honeste, but of straunge conceite;
 Shee thought hym stuffed with courteous phansy swete,
 A gentle knyghte who never none dydde harme,
 That harme deserved not, full of everie charme,
 Of grate empyrse and deedes of peerlesse fame;
 Nor in hys presence wolde shee aske hys name,
 Nor cared to question hym from whence hee came.
 Hys presence was y^e sole boone shee required.
 Saie, by what magicke was hyr breste soe fired,
 That hadde bin leman vile to men-at-armes,
 And only practysed in lewd trickes and charmes
 Misfortune's bastarde staggering thoro' y^e world
 Like withered leafe by cruel tempeste whirled—
 No magicke save humanitie's softe spelle
 That reached the fountayne of hyr harte's depe well,
 And bydd teares flowe which never flowed before,
 Rousing her soule by slepe benumbed no more;
 Soche wondrous powre hath Virtue's earnest eye
 Veiled with y^e fringe of bewteous Modestie;
 Soche charme hath Sympathie to touch the germe
 Of hidden goodnesse gnawed by Sorrow's worme,
 Cankered by worldlie care; and bidde it bloome,
 And Heaven-ward tourne from marge of icy tombe.

"Y^e neue Babes of y^e Wood." A Metrical Fragment.

ABOUT twenty minutes might have elapsed, during which no one took any notice of the insensible victim

of the brutality narrated in our last chapter, when a brace of thieves, very much out of luck, who were just deliberating on the inducements held out by the casual ward of that district as compared with those of Shoreditch, where they had slept the previous night, stumbled upon what they first took to be a drunken man lying in the street. Quickly did they show that they at least were no Pharisees and Levites to pass by on the other side. Without a word expressing surprise, or emotion of any kind, they darted rapidly to the rescue, like a brace of shadows suddenly let loose from a very dark wall to contend for the privilege of attaching themselves to the body of some prostrate Peter Schmemmil, who might be supposed to offer a vacancy for an unemployed umbra on the spot. Gently and tenderly did one of them lift his right arm and feel—not the stranger's heart, to see if any signs of life beat there, but his watch—not his pulse, but his pockets. Skilfully and dexterously did the other possess himself of a handful of souvenirs, in the shape of his purse, card-case, and other trifles. Then, acting in admirable concert, they turned him round, as if bent on exhibiting the process recommended to resuscitate the drowned, and felt in his coat-pockets behind, whence they took a small volume with gold clasps, a pocket-handkerchief, and other trifles. Doubtless, with the excellent object of giving him a better opportunity of respiration, one of them next proceeded to whip off his black silk tie. What further they might have done, we know not. All we do know is that at that moment—as if owing to their kind attentions—the injured man opened his eyes; and a Cain-like

scowl flitted over the face of one of the wiry and undersized ruffians, whilst he lifted his head, with a muttered oath, as if to dash it down again with violence on its stony pillow.

But listen ! a footstep approaches. These Good Samaritans are unwilling to be seen in the exercise of their charity. They lay his head down softly, and listen ; as you might fancy a couple of Red Indians disturbed in the act of scalping a victim by the thud of the approaching gallop of a patrol of Texan Rangers. "Hook it !" was the brief whispered remark, uttered so simultaneously that we are not quite sure whether it really proceeded from both, or disengaged itself from the dirty comforter which acted as respirator to only one of the pair. The sound of the caution thus uttered might have reminded you of the hiss of a snake from out of his blanket in the serpent-house in the Zoological Gardens, where foreign reptiles are far more tenderly housed than pauper British children. A moment—and the pair of guilty shadows have gained the midnight darkness of the gloomy wall, whence in due time they emerged at a convenient distance, and added two more to the number of unholy gainers by the licentious traffic of the gorgeous Escurial that night.

During the next few moments the stranger had groaned once or twice, opened his eyes, striven to rise, and finally crawled towards the solitary lamp-post at a corner of the street, which served to make darkness visible around. Meanwhile, a female figure, dressed in dusky, faded habiliments, very much in unison with a pale and careworn young face, and

delicate and small features expressing the deepest chronic anxiety and grief, approached him, and stood gazing with a sort of subdued expression of curiosity and interest on his proceedings. Then, as if comprehending suddenly that he stood in need of aid, she stooped and helped him to rise and gain the lamp-post, where he leaned for a few moments collecting his thoughts, and gaining strength to speak.

"I will reward you handsomely," he said at length, "if you will kindly lend me your assistance to get away from this place. Good Heavens!" he added, "I have been robbed too. My watch and purse, even my gloves and handkerchief, are gone."

"Take mine, sir," she said; "it is quite clean, although it is in holes. Let us wipe the blood away from your face. You must have been garotted by some wretches, who have left you here."

In a few words he explained to her what had occurred.

"Am I much disfigured?" he inquired.

"Here is a terrible lump on your forehead, and a gash under the right eye, and you seem to have had a cut on your nose with something sharp—possibly a ring. These wretches are in the habit of wearing large rings on purpose to inflict a greater injury. Or perhaps it was a knuckle-duster."

"A knuckle-duster!" quoth the injured gentleman, with a puzzled air. "Oh! I see, something like the classical cestus, I suppose. Surely the bridge of my nose is not broken?" he asked. "No, it has escaped, thank Heaven. And now," he said, "I cannot reward you; for everything of value about me

is gone. Stop! Where is the main entrance to this atrocious *guet-apens*? I must and will give these cowardly scoundrels in charge. Can you find me a policeman, my good friend?"

"Alas!" she replied, "I am not one to give advice to a gentleman like you; but I know a little—too much—of these things. Are you prepared for all that you will have to face in the morning?—the publicity, the police-court, and, above all, the newspapers? Excuse me, sir," she added, "for my boldness; but I thought you were hardly in a fit state to judge of the matter calmly, sadly beaten and treated as you have been."

"You are right," said the stranger. "Indeed, when I reflect, I could not have done a more foolish and ruinous thing. It might mar every prospect I have in life. I suppose," he added, with an attempt at a smile, which we must characterise as a ridiculous failure, "that I must pay the penalty of my rashness in entering such a place. I assure you it is the first time I ever did such a thing in my life. I was impelled by a silly curiosity, and it will be a lesson to me as long as I live. And now, my friend, you will add to the favour by giving me the shelter of your roof and a little soap and water, that I may refit, and make myself a little less hideous, before I return to my hotel."

While saying this the pair had advanced, the gentleman in evident pain and difficulty, aided as he was by his fragile and yet, strange to say, strong companion, nearly the whole length of a dark and deserted street.

The freshness and purity, so to speak, of the gentleman's words and tones had shot a strange sensation into some true womanly recess of that forlorn female's heart.

"I dare not ask you into my place," she said; "it is not a fit one for you—it is not, indeed."

The young man—he was about twenty-three years of age—regarded her with evident interest. Slight, dark, and singularly graceful in his appearance; a thin moustache, and a fringe of glossy whisker alone redeemed his face from the charge of being too feminine in his appearance. But for these the young woman would have taken him for a clergyman—a class she had only come into contact with in the person of the mechanical divine who had buried her child but a fortnight before in Brompton Cemetery, and who was fast becoming imbecile from the melancholy and monotonous nature of his daily employment. We do not include a pretender whom she once met in the shape of a tract distributor, who polluted his holy calling by visiting his "lost and erring sisters," as he called them, and using the opportunity it gave him for the most depraved purposes. But this gentleman was what she thought in her heart a clergyman should resemble.

"If you can take me in," he said with a smile of mingled sweetness and dignity, "you need not be afraid. I care not how humble is your abode, and I will amply reward your kindness."

The girl looked, paused, and hesitated; but an irresistible inclination led her to assent. Nor was this inclination by any means divested of common and

selfish motives ; for mingled with it was the wordly craving that he would somehow prove a valuable friend. And yet no thought of impropriety flashed across her imagination for a moment. She thought to herself that a change in her luck might be at hand—that something very good was about to happen to her—had she not just picked up a little steel horse-shoe broken from a brooch or shawl-pin ?

“Well,” she said, with a momentary look that might have become a vestal martyr beaming from some painted window in the glory of a summer eve—a look that was, strange to say, almost angelic in its expression, in spite of her worn features and eyes, from which the lustre, and hope, and joyousness of youth seemed to have fled and for ever departed—“well, I do not think I could easily refuse any request to you. You seem so good and noble,” she added, with something which almost did duty for a blush suddenly overspreading her countenance, and as suddenly disappearing, as if it were a momentary reflection of flame.

To speak the truth, the aspect of her face, taken in connexion with her general surroundings, would have suggested little save low dissipation and habitual vice to the practised eye, but to Lord Egbert Montreville—for such was her companion’s title and name—it spoke only of privation and want, a piteous tale of a poor needlewoman’s distress.

“And what is your occupation, may I ask?” pursued Lord Egbert. The girl looked down and answered not a word. “I mean, do you work at any

business—such as a milliner's, for example? I hope you do not think me very curious," he said.

A slight spasm quivered over her expressive face, followed by a shade so dark that the young man actually looked up, as if he fancied something had flitted over their heads. A sudden and violent attack of pain in his hip, where he had received a severe kick from one of the myrmidons of Mr. Slimy Cash, caused him at the moment to stagger and lean rather heavily upon his companion. To his surprise, he perceived that she was trembling from head to foot.

"I hope I have not annoyed you by asking your occupation; but judging from"—(here he involuntarily looked at her shabby attire and hesitated)—"from the hour at which you are abroad," he said, with some confusion, "I—— Pardon me, it is very possible that you have known better days."

His companion shook her head.

"I have known but few days," she said, "but those of poverty and shame." (Defiantly.) "I don't think you will go home with me if I tell you what I am. But what would be the use of lying? I am what man, not God, has made me! but you need not be afraid of coming home to my lodging, sir," she added, "for all that. You are different from any one to whom I ever spoke in my whole life before. I know a good man when I see one; because," she added, bitterly, "I suppose I have met so many that are bad."

To say that Lord Egbert was greatly shocked and surprised would be an exaggeration in which, as

faithful historians, we shall not indulge. But he was both a little surprised and shocked. Like a true gentleman and Christian, as he was—ay, and an eccentric young nobleman to boot—one of the most delicate of that chivalry now, alas! become so rare even in its rougher attributes and ruder shape—he replied, almost lightly, though there was deep feeling and pity mingled in his tones :

“Nay, you have not frightened me, though I am very sorry for what I have just heard. I cannot tell you how sorry, my poor girl.” And he purposely leaned a trifle more heavily on her arm, as they continued to pursue their way. “And now I will tell you something of my own history,” he said, almost gaily. “I am engaged to be married almost immediately to a young lady, and we are going out to a distant colony, where I am nominated to an appointment. And I am truly grateful to you for your aid, and, above all, for your good sense, which prevented me from rushing into a disgraceful notoriety, which might have required more explanation than I should have cared to give, and perhaps—who knows?—have injured both my prospects and happiness.”

“I am sure,” said his companion, with a voice slightly husky and unsteady, “that the lady, if she is worthy of you, would never have thought any harm. I am sure that *I* should not, but then I am very different from a lady like her. I sometimes wonder,” she added, almost childishly, “what a virtuous young lady, who has never known any of the wickedness of this world, is like—I mean to speak to, and all that.”

"She is an angel!" cried Lord Egbert.

"Yes," replied his companion, "but then, you see, I don't know much about angels, except that they have wings. I sometimes dream that even I have wings in my sleep."

Talking in this manner, with an eccentricity of confidence on the part of the young nobleman, and in a tone and style on the part of his companion, interesting from its simplicity and earnestness, though mingled with a kind of latent desperation and hopeless abandon, which it was saddening to feel rather than observe on the part of one so young, and apparently friendless and forlorn, the pair proceeded slowly on their way through some of the poorest and dingiest streets past the Seven Dials. But we must pause for a moment to afford our readers some insight into the character, habits, and disposition of Lord Egbert Montreville.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LADY ELFRIDA.

A gentle youth ;
 Yet full of strong desires—to be a man ;
 And fight the World's great battle on the side
 Of Truth and Justice. We would call him "girl ;"
 But never spirit set a lance in rest
 More firm and dauntless.

LORD EGBERT MONTREVILLE was an enthusiast, a visionary if you please, a man altogether unlike what one ordinarily meets with in this world. With a constitution far from robust, he had led a life chiefly of seclusion and study ; he avoided the society of men of his own age, from utter indifference if not aversion to most of their pursuits. He was the youngest son of a noble family possessed of great influence on the Tory side of politics ; but his peculiar views led him to entertain rather ultra-liberal principles in many things. He was an ardent friend of all oppressed nationalities, and possessed the confidence of such men as Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Kosuth. With the cause of Poland his young name was identified, wherever the pulse of one of her hapless sons beat defiance and hatred to the op-

pressor's iron rule. For the poor of his own land, he had a sympathy as painful as it was ardent or deep. This was by no means the first time he had talked familiarly with a poor creature in the street. Nay, he had ventured into many a fever den and haunt of misery and vice. Nor had he ever had reason to repent these visits; for the lowest thieves had never sought to injure him, in return for his goodness. Their instincts taught them what he was; and so far they showed themselves superior to the bravoës of the Escorial, who had so maltreated him that night. For the ignorant robber and necessitous thief is far nearer the footstool of Divine mercy and forgiveness, than the prosperous pander to the vices for which Society and hypocrisy compound. At Harrow his girlish face and retiring habits had won him the nickname of the Lady Elfrida. Yet, strange to say, even among boys, there was something in his earnest innocence and generous nature which won him, from the most brutal and tyrannical, both friendship and respect. The Lady Elfrida was petted and caressed by some of the most fiery spirits among the elder youths and leaders of the school. Thus he had long escaped the bullying persecution which most neophytes underwent. With a favourite chum, he would pass his leisure time in reading well-thumbed romances from the chief pastrycook and librarian of the village, or in strolling about the extensive pleasure-grounds of one of the masters of Harrow, which were, under certain restrictions, not unfrequently thrown open to the boys. Here he would walk with his young companion, their arms round each other's

necks, singing or reciting such fragments of song or ballad as struck their boyish imagination and fancy. At length an incident occurred which brought out the manly and heroic part of his character, but caused his early departure from the school. One day Lord Egbert, then about fourteen years of age, observed several of the boys engaged, with all the cruelty of which boys are capable, in teasing and torturing an old crazy creature, known to them by the name of "Mad Bess." The chief of the tormentors was a boy, a year older and half a head taller, and far stronger than Egbert. This young brute had just burnt the poor old creature with a lighted fusee, which he managed to place in her tangled grey hair, and which caused her to scream with mingled torture and affright. Lord Egbert ran to her assistance, and with some difficulty removed the burning fusee from her elf-locks; but his motives being misapprehended, the old witch-wife, as they called her, severely scratched and clawed his face in requital, which caused the young mischief-makers exquisite delight. The chief bully especially taunted and reviled him for his pains, called him a "girl," and asked him where his petticoats had been left. All this and more Lord Egbert would have endured; but when the other produced a fresh fusee, and threatened not only to set the old woman alight again, but to punish the "milk-sop" who interfered, he told him firmly that he did not care for himself, but he would not see a finger laid on the poor old creature by such a cowardly sneak again. Then the boys gathered round, and the bully said, "Will you fight

me?" and Lord Egbert said he would; and the party adjourned to the grassy slope beneath the school-house, which was the Campus Martius of their youthful encounters; and Lord Egbert accepted a second, took off his jacket and waistcoat, and appeared in the juvenile ring. As it happened, none of the elder lads were about. For a quarter of an hour Lord Egbert seemed nearly at the mercy of his bigger opponent; and even some of the young scapegraces, who usually delighted in a good "mill," declared he was a plucky fellow, and should have no more of it. But Lord Egbert, bruised and bleeding as he was, and knocked down again and again, came up pale and stern to the encounter each time, and bade his friends mind their own business and see fair play, in a cool and resolute though piping tone, and so the unequal contest continued. To the surprise of all, the red-headed bully, who was somewhat full in flesh, began at last to breathe thickly and show symptoms of distress, and three whole rounds passed without the Lady Elfrida being floored a single time. Then the tide of battle wavered and changed, and amid the ringing cheers of those joyous young patrons of the ring, the bully at last fell before his youthful opponent, more from exhaustion and the effects of his own exertions in inflicting punishment, than from the force of the Lady Elfrida's slender arm. In a few more rounds, the boys discovered that the puny and effeminate lordling was actually fighting for points, and was gradually closing one of the windows of his burly opponent's savage and vindictive soul, with as much purpose as the renowned

Thomas Sayers, when he gradually blinded Heenan, and the fruits of his prowess were snatched from him by systematic trickery on the part of those in the opposite faction, when they saw it was only a matter of a few minutes, and that their champion would soon be swinging his huge arms about, helpless, in the dark. Not so the Harrow boys—they had no money on the event—they were young Englandites bent on fair-play, and their sympathies were with the “little un” and the weaker side. A second time did Master Osborne Clark, the braggart and animal torturer, embrace his mother earth; but, unlike Antæus, he rose weakened by each successive fall. Then the boys’ enthusiasm knew no bounds. Up went caps and jackets into the air, and the cries of “Go it, little un!” “Pitch it into him, your ladyship!” “Close his other shutter!” “Don’t go in for a fall!” resounded over the field. A few minutes after, the blinded and crest-fallen bully was led ignominiously from the field; but the victory cost Egbert dear. Another minute, and he fainted in his second’s arms. A surgeon was sent for, and the boy taken home, whence the family physician imperatively forbade that he should be sent again. His constitution had received a severe shock, he said; and he would not answer for the consequences, if the lad returned to school. Such was the boy, father of the man, whom we have seen assaulted and kicked out of the Escorial in so unprovoked and ignominious a manner. Such are the contrarieties, the injustice, and absurdity of human life, wherein no man who is a living actor in it can say what a day will bring forth, into what

snare he may fall, what mishap may occur to him, or whether his life and character are assured to him for an hour. Such was the man whom, with unsuspecting confidence, we see accompanying a frail and apparently most dangerous female to her dwelling, impelled only by an absurd and altogether insufficient want, if it really were one, which could have been far better satisfied at any coffee-house or apothecary's shop which he passed on his eccentric course.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WAY TO ACHILLES'-BUILDINGS, AND WHAT
HAPPENED THERE.

Hast thou e'er chanced to see the sudden look
 That sometimes on the Wanton's painted features,
 Set in the stale attraction of forced smiles,
 Darkens so wildly, that like one amazed
 She reels from the cracked mirror, to her brow
 Lifts her wan jewelled finger—tries to *think* ?
 The reckless provocation of her glances
 Changed all to sickly twilight, blank dismay :
 And when thought comes, hast seen the poor wretch quiver,
 Her eyes' fire turned to water, those blue eyes
 Where once sweet fancies woven danced in light ?
 Hast seen the Present, Future, Past, appal her ;
 The Spectre of her grown-up life arise
 Ever between her childhood's innocent dawn
 And the lost thing, herself ? Hast seen her choke
 Upon her scanty food ? Hast seen Despair
 Clutch her polluted bosom ? Seen her teeth,
 Pearls that have outlived their neglected home,
 Shine whiter for that ruin ; and her lips,
 Like bruised lilies trampled in the dust,
 Whose wasted fragrance wakes to life no more ?

He that hath seen this hath beheld a sight
 To palsy Rapture, make e'en Lewdness grieve,
 Youth grow a hermit, Age old vices leave.

WE left our ill-assorted couple wending their way,
 as best they might, somewhere in the unenticing
 neighbourhood of the Seven Dials.

Let it not be supposed, for one instant, that our
 bruised knight-errant and his attendant damsel passed
 through the dingy quarter of the town where they

shortly found themselves, without eliciting comment or remark. Low-browed cads and belated hucksters, and the vagabonds who hang about the corners of the streets, round "sloop"-stalls and potato-cans, were profuse in their loudly uttered remarks and criticisms.

"My eyes, Bill, twig that genteel cove with his heye in mourning and his 'ead in a sling."

"Look 'ere, Jem," a shrill voice would cry, "here's a nobleman in disguise come hup to town to sell his father's hold clothes."

"Vy he's been a fightin' along with that bloomin' beauty."

"I say, hold chap," another would exclaim, "hi! you with the torn 'andkercher, can't yer afford better duds for yer fancy gal than them rags of hern?"

"Here's a swell as have been fightin'!"

"I say, Sal, you're in luck to-night. What the —— air you bin arter?"

Such exclamations as these were far more frequent than amusing; except perhaps to the ignorant and depraved utterers of them. And, oh! ye law-givers and law-makers, and ofttimes law-breakers, in power and in affluence, have you ever studied the worst features of the back slums of London? Have you ever thought of what an execution-mob multiplied by four score, ay forty score, would be, if ever it were let loose in this wealthy England? Have you thought what the poverty-stricken masses would do, in their brutal ignorance, and with the festering hatred of their hearts, if they were ever once unchained amongst you? The deeds of the French Revolution would

pale in insignificance before the cannibal revenge of the lower classes in this country. And who could wonder at—we had well-nigh said—who could blame them? Have you clothed and fed them, have you educated them, and brought them up with the knowledge of God in their hearts? Your emigrants, whom you might have made an element of strength, had you sent them out to your own magnificent colonies, as you might have done with a blessing, in the idle ships of your proud navy, only waft back a burning curse from their rebellious hearts. And here at home you lack sailors and soldiers, to maintain your misused power, and are burdened with a costly machinery that can scarcely keep your criminal and pauper population in check. Some such thoughts as these hastily flitted through Lord Egbert's brain, as he passed through the squalid streets, where humanity had almost lost its distinctive traits in the repulsive features and expression of the hideous and unearthly-looking wretches around. How loathsome appeared their food-shops, where "luxuries" which thousands would have deemed themselves too happy to have the pence to purchase, were repulsively displayed; meat-shambles, with their flaring gas-lights, from whose diseased "cag-mag" the pampered beasts at the Zoological Gardens would turn. Then there were stalls of molluscous products unknown even by name to consumers above the lowest class; fish-counters where stale plaice showed their typhoid-like spots, alongside of heaps of bruised sprats, and Dutch herrings impregnated with more than Dead Sea salt. Decayed vegetables, and goitred apples of Cretin

growth ; dirty and ill-baked bread of clammy appearance and unwholesome hue ; clothes-marts that seem to threaten the air with contagion, and the earth with parasitical life ; coal-sheds where damp and stony fuel costs the poor man one hundred per cent. more than the rich, with long credit to be added in on their side, ever pay—these are some of the temptations which invite the working man to lay out his hard-earned wages, in order that his wife and little ones may eat the scanty dole which sometimes supports, and not unfrequently poisons, the springs of existence in their shrunken veins. Beyond this, there is a depth far lower still ; the penniless vagrant and the starving outcast, whose dying moans curdle the icy blast and infect the damp and noxious atmosphere of the narrow and greasy street, the blind alley and the murderous slum. And beyond this again lie the police-court, the gaol, the hospital, the workhouse, and the grave !

What are the enjoyments of the poor ? None, literally none ; save those which are blistered by Sin and Shame, and breathed on by Death. You, legislators and Pharisees, who take such a morose delight in worrying with over-legislation those who have so little to solace the toils and miseries of life, what is it that inspires your selfish aims ? You would ruin the trade of the respectable licensed victualler by robbing the poor man of the means of refreshment and necessary sustenance, through the iniquitous restriction of your arbitrary laws. You make his Sunday a day of brutal impiety, a day sacred to drink and blasphemy ; drink within legal and stated hours for

drunkenness, and blasphemy throughout all, from haggard morn to ghastly night. You carefully and piously close every institution that could possibly instruct and divert his mind, while you loll in your clubs and carriages, quaff your claret at any hour of the Lord's Day, indulge in swinish gluttony, and finish with cards, or a "little music," which the most decent or hypocritical sinners among you call "sacred;" with an effrontery which makes your servants grin, and your sons and daughters smile over the hollowness of your hearts. The very waste in your kitchens would provide all the hungry wretches in your cities with a meal; yet you deny it, and give it not. Lo! on your palace-roofs and housetops brood vast phantoms of vengeance, sitting darkly with closed wings, until the hour arrives, as vultures await a feast, after the encounter of armed hosts.

The singular and unequal pair, whose proceedings we have endeavoured so far to commemorate, at length reached a row of somewhat tall but unwholesome-looking houses situated in the debatable land between St. Giles's and Holborn. Achilles'-buildings, as we will call them, had formerly been the abode of respectability, and even distinction, about the period when Addison's "Spectator" astonished the public with its fine writing. Somehow or other, they had degenerated, as human beings sometimes do, till they became the habitation of thieves, forgers, magismen, and felons of every degree. A corner house, rather larger than the others, was converted into a den of notorious infamy in its day, and

received the nickname of "The Greenhouse," it might be difficult to say how or why. Perhaps it was kept by a matron of the name of Green; perhaps it was owing to the fittings of some one of its numerous apartments; perhaps it was originated in an allusion to the verdant nature of the fools and profligates allowed within its precincts; perhaps, and more probably, it had at some period boasted green blinds and curtains, or a green door. We leave this to be determined by the curious in such matters, who are always poking their noses into the rubbish of some ignominious dust-hole of antiquity. Certain it is, that over that house, for nearly a century, there had hung the gloom of crime and mystery. Dark and terrible deeds were said to have taken place in it; and unquestionably one horrid murder had been committed there in the present century, the perpetrator of which never paid the penalty of his crime. Some forty years before, an attempt had been made to cleanse and purge these polluted dwellings. For a time, two or three decent families made an effort to reside there, while the rest remained tenantless; until decay set in and all the remaining windows were broken. Then they relapsed into something approaching their former state. A clan of low Irish, and some poor families of workmen, settled there. Gradually it became a crowded rookery of poverty, squalor, and disease. The houses in their interior economy resembled some of the worst flats in the Old Town of Edinburgh. There was a fetid smell common to all, blotched and yellow walls, broken staircases, and general dirt, decay, and wretchedness. In most cases the grey

old grimy doors, whose strength had outlived the violence of drunken inmates and visitors, as well as the frequent attacks of constables, were never latched, or effectually closed, either by day or night. A low beer-shop flanked the other end of these gloomy habitations, whence shriek, and oath, and brawl often startled the hurrying passer-by, from dusk to midnight. Two or three cellars were open by day for the sale of second-hand shoes and boots, and slop-clothings; whence might be seen poking and protruding various hooked-noses of the sausage type appertaining to the chosen people, from paroquet to macaw size, from the promising proboscis of snivelling infancy and dirt-pie beatitude, to the mighty shadow-stretching "*Wellingtonius giganteus*" of the patriarch of the slums. Into by no means the least forbidding of these houses did Lord Egbert follow his companion, who pushed its door open, without the slightest appearance of hesitation or fear. To say that he felt quite at his ease would be a statement in which we should be sorry to indulge.

For throughout this narrative to state truthful facts is our chief endeavour and pride, even at the risk of offending those to whom the trite aphorism, that "truth is stranger than fiction," is not present to act as sponsor and defender of our relation. To narrate common and every-day events is an easier task than to unravel the dark web of mystery and improbability in human events. The human heart itself is always sufficiently strange and subtle in its promptings and windings, its desires and concealments, to afford ample scope even for the chronicler

of the ordinary occurrences of life in a parsonage or a village to amuse, and even astonish, if he or she have the genius to do so. We have taken rougher and bolder work in hand. We might skim more pleasantly over the surface of life, and yet suggest many things to the credit side of the devil, with a laxity of purpose, or a design not to be found in this work. Nor are the reflections scattered throughout these pages of a character either to flatter or please the respectable hypocrites of Society, or of that most pernicious deluder, both of himself and of others, the British optimist of the nineteenth century ; the man of gas and steam, of Crystal Palace (closed on Sundays) and high art, the babbler about "geist," whatever that may be, the philanthropic blower of starving rebels from great guns in the red mist of blood and shamble-stench of smoke, the remedial patchwork agitator of plans to repair the tattered, shattered, hopeless humanity of the lower classes, as you would stop an inundation with a spadeful of sand, or stanch the bleeding wounds of a nation with a pinch of the nap from the sterile brim of a Quaker's pretentious hat. Our diatribes will only meet with a healthy response in youthful or earnest hearts ; in the breasts of the old who have stood aside and apart during the riot of a godless age ; in the feelings of men who have still something of the old Cromwellian spirit surging in their veins ; or in the Falklands who grieve over England amid the rage of party strife, and the conflict of mediocrities in the emulous struggle for place and power which destroys our greatness and barter away our rights. To those whose minds

embrace any grand and generous scheme of regeneration, we alone address the moral of these pages. Alas! could our existing laws put down all rampant and external vice, there would be none save hypocrites left. As it is, they only foster and increase it.

Lord Egbert's refined senses and culture caused him to sicken and shudder at the objects by which he found himself surrounded. Yet not less patiently did he wait in the reeking passage whilst his improper acquaintance sought and lighted a guttering dip, with which, shading it in a somewhat downcast and timid manner with a hand which might have been almost transparent, but for its manifest dingy hue, she lighted her aristocratic companion up the rickety stairs. There was some trace of the ancient uses and substantial prosperity of the house still discernible in fragments of scrollwork in the ceilings of the landing-places, and in the oak banisters, in which deep cuts and dilapidations had become rounded by use, and greased by the contact of many a dirty hand. The ground-floor passage might be characterised as tomb-like and frowzy; one might have fancied oneself in the sepulchre of all the modern tribe of Nathan—it was like coming on the remains of a full-flavoured family of Roman money-lenders in Pompeii or Herculaneum, or perhaps it might be better described as resembling a sniff of the pit of an East-end theatre on a Saturday night under a plentiful dispensation of "paper" from a Hebrew lessee. From a room on the first floor came sounds of oaths and revelry; from the second, a noise of oaths and wife-beating; from the third, oaths alone.

From one of the garrets on the fourth floor they heard the voice of a child crying and moaning as if from hunger—a wail of the great London wilderness, that, often heard, causes some to disbelieve in the existence of a God at all; and some to believe that there is, and must be, a Supreme Being to rectify the injustice visited even on babes and sucklings here, in another and a far different world. The opposite and remaining door was ajar, and Lord Egbert and his conductress silently entered. The room was poorer but certainly cleaner than he expected. All the furniture consisted of a wretched wooden bedstead, with apparently but scanty clothing; a deal table; a single visible chair, on which from sheer pain and exhaustion he sank down; a box which apparently served occasionally as a second seat; a washing-stand, and an empty bird-cage. Yes, there was something else. A child's cot, carefully covered up, stood on a second chair, which it partially concealed, in a corner of the room parallel with the bed. "Good Heavens!" thought Lord Egbert, as he glanced from his companion, who was busy doing her best to light a fire in the narrow grate, "is it possible that a young mother can leave her child and rove abroad in the streets in this manner?" He shuddered as he thought that perhaps maternal instinct drove her wolf-like to prowl forth in search of sustenance by night. Thinking thus, he rose softly, and approached the cradle to look at the sleeping babe. Very gently and slowly he lifted the humble coverlet, and peeped within, expecting to see a pale and sickly little face of slumbering innocence, for it was evident in his

thought that the little occupant slept. Perhaps the mother, impelled by dire necessity, had given it a dose of one of those terrible sedatives which the poor are forced to use, and which sometimes turn a fretful doze into everlasting sleep—an “elixir,” or “cordial,” prepared and sold by the skeleton apothecary, Death. Had he thought more curiously, he might have wondered that the young mother did not rush to her child’s cradle to see how it had fared during her absence, and perhaps imprint a passionate kiss on its little brow or lips. But then he was not much experienced in maternal ways. So he peered into the cradle in a very benevolent manner, considering his age and sex, somewhat curious to see what sort of an atomic image of humanity was reposing therein. But there was nothing there. Yes, there was a little withered bundle of violets, which, sooth to say, had been bought in the streets, and which, could tears have revived them, would have looked as fresh as when they were gathered in a nurseryman’s grounds somewhere between Wandsworth and New Brompton. Could the red core of the mother’s anguished heart have revived their cut stalks, as we read in the recipes of the “Family Herald” that sealing-wax properly applied will do, they would have bloomed in that cradle for many a day. Why are some children born but to die; nay, why are others born to live, we would say? To one a gilded fuss, and the pomp of servile over-care that may kill equally with neglect; to another a very brief and uncomfortable inheritance of “Trismus neonatorum”—nothing save workhouse convulsions to notify that a soul has lived

to hear a few groans in this world, and gone back thither whence it came, to furnish a blank little page in the Divine Judgment Book above. To this last, a mere shiver of the knocker on the door of human existence, promptly answered by the voice of Fate, "There is no room here!"

Better this than to be swaddled in a palace, and buried wrinkled and grey-headed in a cathedral, leaving none to shed a tear, after having caused a sea of tears and blood to flow during a weary lifetime of unhallowed deeds.

Very quickly, but still gently, did Lord Egbert suffer the covering of the cradle to shroud its silent emptiness again. He saw with pain that the mother had observed his action, by the added rapidity and confusion of her fingers, as she sought to thrust the falling sticks of wood through the bars of the grate; nay, he heard it in the agitated rustle of the paper with which she renewed the failing experiment to create a blaze. He saw her lithe frame sway to and fro, as, still on her knees, she reached the candle from the ground by her side to set a light to her handiwork again. As the fire suddenly flared up, he noticed what he had not seen before, that she was in a sort of shabby apology for mourning. Why should he have noticed that? So many women wear black, who are not in mourning, and so many wear mourning who are not in black. One may dress in sombre clothes for a sick hope, or a guilty life, or because it is becoming, or because the wearer has no other garments to put on. Lord Egbert was in a dilemma—he did not know exactly what to do.

When they meet as perfect strangers for the first time, under odd circumstances, and without introduction, people are very apt to be extremely confidential and tell each other all their secrets, especially if they are sorrows and complaints. On the other hand, the ice being once broken, one naturally wants to know everything, just because one knows nothing at all. So Lord Egbert spoke out accordingly, and said :

“I fear you have had a sad loss very lately—have you not?”

Then she uprose and told him all about it, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, and frequent adjurations to Heaven. She asked God to witness how she loved her child—all that she had ever had to love in this world. And she said that He also knew that she wished to die, and follow her boy to his grave, as soon as it pleased Him to release her from a life of utter misery and woe. She had first thought of starving herself to death, “and that” (with a bitter laugh) “would not be very difficult, you know. I should not have to buy anything for that.” But a kind friend—a poor creature little better off than herself — had come in and forced her to eat. It was she who helped to bury the child—it was done very respectably, she said, and they had a mourning-coach—“and I could not refuse her well—could I?” she said, “when she knelt by me and entreated me to live?” The last few days she had felt quite careless and numb-like, and didn’t care how things went. But the few words he had spoken to her had somehow put quite a new feeling into her heart. The story was nearly all true; except that she had not con-

fessed that after the first shock was over, she had felt more anxiety to live and do something better for herself, than ever she had experienced before, and that when she first saw Lord Egbert, she somehow fancied that he would bring her luck. Perhaps she had not very carefully analysed her own feelings, and was scarcely conscious of her exact mental state herself. Then, with all the volubility of grief, when it finds a sympathising listener, or indeed any listener at all, she went on to tell him, that she had been very, very bad, and that her evil habits had indirectly caused her poor child's death. She told him that she had been a confirmed gin-drinker, and a beggar in the streets, sunk in the lowest depths of penury and vice. But there was one thing, she had always avoided when she could. Just before the child's illness, she had twice met a kind and disinterested gentleman who had bestowed on her a bountiful alms.

"Not a gentleman like you," she said, "but quite a gay and careless sort of man; yet, oh! very kind and good. The first time he gave me money, it did me more harm than good. I deceived him, and I think there was a curse with it. For I left my poor dear angel that is gone to the care of strangers, and went out and treated a parcel of wretches, and lost all recollection for days. It was like a hideous dream of leering faces and gay dresses, and jingling glasses and flaring lights," she said; and the poor creature passed her hand over her brow. "But I beg pardon, sir, I am detaining you. Will you not wash the dirt and blood away?"

Lord Egbert requested her to go on. He wanted

to know, how the change, which must have taken place in her since this awful period of depravity and dissipation, had set in.

"Well, sir," she said, "the money all went; and I was beaten, just as you have been, by some women whom I could afford to treat no more, and my poor child showed symptoms of sickening, and I went out one dreadful pouring night in sheer desperation and horror—I don't know for what or wherefore. If I could have got a little drink, I think I should have drowned myself off Waterloo Bridge. I knew a girl who had done it; and there was another who had sworn a solemn oath she would do it any time with me. I went to her lodgings; but she was in bed quite stupefied with drink, and I could not get even the price of a glass from her. Well, sir, I was wandering along, thinking if I should be able to pick up a few pence, before the public-houses were closed, when I met the gentleman who had assisted me so generously, again, face to face, in the Strand."

"Will you tell me," interrupted Lord Egbert, "how it was that you first met him, and how he came to assist you so amply and generously as you say? For it seems, however charitable, an unwonted and eccentric act."

"I can only tell you, sir," she answered, "that he seemed a very rich and thoughtless gentleman, though I ought not to say so, for Heaven knows he had thought enough for me; and he met me one afternoon about the same place in the Strand, and I noticed that he looked very hard at me indeed as he

passed by. I must tell you that I was very different then to what you see me now."

Lord Egbert frowned and bit his lip, but said nothing. To his surprise she resumed :

"I was then literally a heap of rags, swarming with vermin, and with scarcely a shoe to my foot. I don't think such a figure was to be seen anywhere, unless, perhaps, in the worst part of Bethnal Green. Some of the people who were used to see me called me the 'Phantom !' and 'Rags !' and others nicknamed me 'Blue Ruin !' and I don't know what besides."

Lord Egbert's face brightened. He had feared that she was about to tell him that she was far more attractive then. And attractive he could easily imagine that she had been, and might be again. Indeed, there was an indefinable charm of natural grace about her even then—a sort of *naïveté* and vivacity, combined with pathos, which interested him in a wonderful degree.

"Well, sir," she continued, "the gentleman turned and passed me again, and then turned back quite suddenly. 'My good creature,' he said, 'do pray tell me, are you obliged to come out like this ?' and then he asked me all about myself. I don't know what put it into my head," she continued, sadly, "but I answered him with a whole string of lies, and said I had a home in the country, not far from Birmingham ; and that if I could get there I should be all right, only that I had not money to pay the fare, or any clothes to show myself in among

respectable people such as my relations were. I assure you this was a sudden thought ; for I never used to tell any lies, or, in fact, to say anything about myself. People would often drop money in my hands, and go away without uttering a word. So that I had very little occasion to lie to them. But I was possessed by some wickedness that day which I have never been able to account for. Well, he gave me five pounds, and a handful of silver besides, and a lady's address, who he said was to give me some clothes ; and if she gave me one, she gave me twenty pounds' worth of things—silk dresses and linen, all marked with her own initials ; and if I did not go to my relations, the things very soon went to the only relative I ever knew—I mean the pawnshop—and in a fortnight I was worse off than before, with the addition of the bruises I received, and my poor dear baby sickening to die.”

“And tell me what you did when you met the gentleman a second time?” said Lord Egbert.

“Indeed,” she replied, “I felt so ashamed—miserable and degraded as I was—that I turned and ran away as fast as my legs would carry me. To my utter surprise and astonishment, the gentleman followed me. He would never have caught me, if I hadn't turned up a sort of street with no outlet, you know, where he ran me into a corner.”

“And what did he say then?” pursued her interrogator. “Do you know, if your story were a little less strange, I should find a difficulty in believing in it?”

“I don't think it is a bit more strange than that

you should be here now," was the quick answer; a proposition in which Lord Egbert could not but tacitly acquiesce.

"He only asked me," she resumed, "why I ran away in that manner, and gave me a lot of loose silver, with a sovereign amongst it."

"And you have never seen him since?" said Lord Egbert.

"Never!" was the answer. "That night I went home quite sober—and did all I could, but too late, too late, to save my poor murdered innocent. But he never looked up any more. He had caught a cold and fever through my drunken neglect of him. Do you know, sir, that if I had done my duty by him, I think I should be almost glad that he was removed out of this wicked, wretched world——?"

"The world," said Lord Egbert, "is often what wicked and wretched people make it."

"It may be so," she exclaimed, "with many; but not with me. I never had a chance to be either good or happy."

"Then you shall have one now," was the grave and quiet answer, in a tone which admitted no doubt both of the speaker's power and intentions to carry out what he said; "that is," he added, after a pause, "if you have the determination and resolution to will it yourself; for the chance is all that I can give you."

All the answer that the bereaved mother made was to kneel down by the side of the empty cradle, and with streaming hair and eyes to utter a few incoherent expressions of pain and sorrow, mingled with

gratitude and hope. As she knelt, the solitary candle flickered in its socket, and the cold and bright moon shed an unearthly radiance over her features, while the tall dark figure of Lord Egbert stood erect like a father confessor listening to the recital of a dying Magdalen's sins, and the avowal of her repentance. And the young man of birth and fashion silently put up a prayer for all human creatures of sin and misery, and for her whose strange story had filled his heart with gentle pity and interest.

The greatest patriot and philosopher would not have despised that scene. Either a Garibaldi, or a Victor Hugo—we grieve not to be able to name a great Englishman of equal breadth of dignity, and catholic nobility of soul; but there doubtless exist many who are unknown to fame—might have acted like Lord Egbert under similar circumstances, were their sympathies withdrawn from a wider circle, and their charity from a grander and more comprehensive range. Many professors of philanthropy and world-graduates, and hollow success-vaunters of the day will authoritatively put down Lord Egbert as a sentimental fool, and declare with a sneer they consider him little better than a lunatic for his pains. Perhaps so; but it is certain that he was unconsciously imitating, at a humble distance, a great example set nearly two thousand years ago, which a large portion of mankind have been constantly preaching, and not practising, nearly ever since, in the most remarkable manner. We cannot help thinking that, if the Saviour Himself were to appear now in London, and conduct Himself, as He once did in Galilee, by the banks of

the Thames, He would be committed as a rogue and a vagrant by a metropolitan magistrate or a city Lord Mayor, if His poverty secured Him from the considerate attentions of a mad-doctor. The cry would not be "Crucify him!" but "Lock him up! Lock him up!" What should we think of the eccentricity of a bishop, who despoiled himself of even one-half of his worldly goods, who acted up to any part of his hebdomadal profession of faith? The Ephesian shrine-makers of old were true to Diana, whose creed was probably not a difficult one to follow; but we continue with avidity to make the shrines, and yet practically to deny that God in Whose name they are manufactured, with the most perfect and complete contrariety that human ingenuity ever furnished. There is earnestness in the customs of Dahomey, and devotion in the ministration of a Thug; these mean what they profess, and act it. Not so the modern Christian doctrinaire, whose principles and practice are antagonistic, in proportion to the fervency of his teaching and the ardour of his zeal.

The great bell of Westminster sounded the hour of midnight funereally through the air, as if it were tolling for a nation's death.

"Well, my poor girl," said Lord Egbert, "I will just avail myself of your kindness to improve my appearance a little; and then I will ask you to light me down-stairs. But what is your name and address?"

"Kate Darrell," was the reply, "seven, Achilles'-buildings."

"Will a note find you?" asked Lord Egbert.

The reply was in the affirmative.

"Then I will write," he said, "and make an appointment; and in the mean time we will both consider what is best to be done for you. Your education does not appear to have been entirely neglected."

"Alas!" she replied, "I can scarcely write at all."

"I should not have thought so," observed Lord Egbert, "from the manner in which you speak."

"I am very quick at learning, I believe," said Kate, as we will now call her. "I am told I should make my fortune on the stage."

Lord Egbert shook his head. Inexperienced as he was, he knew how utterly meaningless, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, is such a remark. "I think," he said, "you would find dress-making, or a little shop, more profitable; but you shall do as you like. But which is it to be, tragedy or comedy?" he asked, smiling.

"You must not judge of me as I am now," she answered. "I used to be the merriest, and, some said, the funniest girl alive. It seems a long time ago, although I am barely eighteen now. Though I have never known any real happiness or comfort, but been nurtured amid scenes of misery, that you cannot even imagine, I am sure; yet when I have had the slightest opportunity, I was always the leader in mischief and fun. It was that which got me at last into the frightful habits I have told you of, and from which I was saved alone by that gentleman's act of kindness, and, oh! that I should say it, the loss of

my child. I have never touched a drop of anything stronger than tea since ; not even on the day when I buried him, though they pressed me very hard to drink then, and drown my sorrow, as they said. If I had not had the strength to refuse, my sorrows would have been drowned by this time, and myself with them, I'm thinking."

During all their conversation, Lord Egbert never once alluded to the father of the child, nor asked her any leading question as to the particular events of her life. He rightly guessed that there was nothing in it that could be remedied or improved by meddling with griefs that might or might not be healed and cicatrised by necessity or time. The truth is, that the father of the child was dead too—lay peacefully slumbering in the vicinity of Sebastopol, wrapped in a gorgeously tasselled dressing-gown, which he was wont to wear in life ; and which one of his brother officers, the self-appointed sexton of his brigade, himself formerly one of the gayest men on town, had chosen for his winding-sheet of glory in such hurried obsequies as he could afford. Nor was the gallant and tawny Captain Durant very guilty, so far as Kate had been concerned. In truth, he had been very kind to her, and fully meant to be more so ; but the shell which killed him, one of the very first after landing, also exploded in a certain genteel lodging in Albany-street, Regent's Park, and very direful were the consequences thereof. There were many fond and dear ties severed besides those of matrimony and relationship by that Russian war. Many a slender, lily-like being, whose wedding-ring was not placed on her

finger at the altar, or by a license, that we can properly term "special," bowed her head and died, when one name had met her burning gaze, and the newspaper had fallen from her opening fingers convulsed with grief; ay, perhaps, more than out of a like number of wedded wives; for these had not lost every tie in this world, and the former had. Nay, there were flaunting widowhoods, even in the Casino, and the "Rooms," which were not altogether devoid of deep feeling and regret, as some more real widowhoods are. Thus it appears that Kate had known some few months of comfort in her life; before sinking into even worse depths of wretchedness than had signalled her early career.

That night, or rather morning, as she crept beneath her narrow coverlet, after Lord Egbert had departed to his luxurious hotel, she felt the strongest presentiment that she was on the threshold of a new phase of existence; that, in her own phraseology, her luck had changed, and that she was about to enter on a new and promising career. We will leave her to her dreams, strange and mingled as they were, half of heaven and half of earth, now bright with innocence, and now with worldly pomp. We will leave her to wander, dressed in a spotless robe of white, through summer meadows, leading her prattling boy, picking celestial daisies and buttercups at her side. We will leave her to curtsy among a bevy of duchesses at a Court ball, while Lord Egbert, in a magnificent uniform, with a beautiful fairy on his arm, smiled approval on so distinguished and fashionable a début.

We will let her rustle among the gorgeous personages of a theatrical scene, while poor Captain Durant bowed approval from a side-box. Gradually his features change and stiffen; and the bouquet he was about to throw to her feet turns into a bunch of decayed and contorted weeds, as if in mockery, at her feet. She would kick them away, but they change to serpents, and crawl up her limbs. Horror! she is in rags again; and 'tis a grinning skeleton that is mopping and mowing at her, yet somehow in the likeness of the cross young man, assistant at the pawnbroker's shop. Stay! he throws a bundle at her. He rejects her pledge. What is it? She tears it hurriedly open. It is her lost child's little frock and under-clothes, and tiny ragged shoes. Next a Shape rises, and mocks her with hoarse screams. 'Tis the gin-fiend! Avaunt! avaunt! With a choked cry she is about to awake; but we will not wake her. With the pale flock of trooping dreams we will glide softly away from her bedside. We send poor Durant back to the bloody trench, and the child to his little grave, so small that it looks hardly like a real thing, but a mound which children themselves might have heaped up in their innocent play. We follow Lord Egbert's noble semblance away, till it glides at cock-crow through the closed door of the Colonnade Hotel. And then with a wave of the enchanter's pen we transport our readers elsewhere. We return this puppet to its chest, and take out another and another for brief use, to be put back in its turn. For on this very morning, ere early London has rubbed its eyes,

and finally settled that it is awake ; and while the representatives of the night-bird section of the public are severally seeking their matutinal roost—printers, policemen, newspaper writers, and the like—we intend to lay aside our puppets for a triennial rest, and not to open our galanty show for at least three years, and in the second volume of our tale.

CHAPTER XIX.

BACK TO QUEEN'S-SQUARE.

The silver orb of Diana shone in the solvent sky like a new florin just issued from the Mint of Space; the golden stars and constellations seemed like sovereigns and half-sovereigns hoarded by grandam Nature until that very date; the Milky-Way showed far off and filmy, like a distant bill of exchange drawn by Time on Eternity, and indorsed by an Almighty hand, when Sir MAMMON, standing under his Belgravian portico, suddenly bethought him of that universal panic when the Bank of the Universe (limited) itself shall break; and thence began to consider the nature of the account to be demanded of him hereafter—his smooth-written diary of selfishness; his cash-book of avarice and greed; his small credit column of good deeds and his heavy debit of evil in the great balance-sheet of life.

And this giant of Cunning, this Colossus of worldly success, cowered like the ragged school-child he had once himself been; as he sought in vain to cast up the accusing figures of Doom on the greasy slate of Memory, smeared over by whining Repentance, ere blotted out for ever by Death.

Under the blue vault of the silent midnight heavens, his soul stood stripped and shivering; and he felt like the ghost of a rich man buried yesterday among the forgotten dead, whose earthly pomp and mansion had passed away from him, as fleeting clouds from the pale clutch of a spectre, or shadows from the voiceless whisper of a shade, and whose treasures were already delivered up for a spoil to those who had amassed them not.—*The Lucubrations of Arthur Aubrey, Esq. From his Commonplace Book in 185-*

THAT very night Arthur Aubrey and his beautiful wife had sat up somewhat late, as they were often wont to do, interchanging their views of life and manners, discussing their friends and acquaintances,

their past, present, and future, and things general and particular. The subject they had started, apropos of some topic of the day, was the action of circumstance upon human actions, and whether a great deal of *soi-disant* merit was not born of circumstance, and a great deal of crime and wickedness of misery and want. In this argument Aubrey showed himself a severe censor of all shortcomings and backslidings. He said that a thief must be a thief at heart, in order to become one at all, and that even necessity was no excuse.

"When you hear," he said, "of a man being driven to drink by misfortune, it is only because an excuse is wanted for that which must sooner or later come out." Prosperity would have developed, according to him, the very same latent propensity in the same man.

"Ah!" said Blanche, "you have had no trials—you have known nothing save luxury. You do not know the temptations of the poor."

"Now," rejoined Arthur, "there are bad husbands, you know. I suppose, if I were to turn out a wretch, under temptations, you would make excuses for me?"

"Would I?" said Blanche, archly; "but could you be tempted, sir?"

"Well," replied Arthur, "not easily, perhaps, my love; but circumstances, you know, may be so very strong, according to your theory. I am sure you would become my advocate in such a case."

"The crimes of the heart," returned Blanche, "are precisely those which would plead no 'extenuating

circumstances' successfully to me. But regarding the temptations, for example, of the poor and destitute—if I were starving, would you not break the law for me?"

"I see," answered Arthur, "that you are bent on my conviction as a thief. Who can say 'no,' under such circumstances?"

"If we had a child, and it lacked sustenance," cried Blanche, "do you think I would not snatch a loaf from a baker's shop for it? What mother could restrain her desperation?"

"Yet," said Arthur, "but a few years since, under the sanguinary laws of England, women were hanged for such deeds. The starving mother of a starving child has been executed at Tyburn for stealing a penny loaf."

Blanche shuddered. "I cannot," she said, "trust myself to think, much less speak, of such a deed."

"And even now," rejoined Arthur, "the mother thus acting under the holiest impulse of nature, would be torn from her offspring and flung into a gaol, thence to undergo penalties almost worse than death. But what can Society do? This very night, there are hundreds perishing in London from want of common necessities. The muster-roll of Death, during a sharp frost in England, is not less numerous than when cholera stalks lurid through the land. But you would not suspend the action of the law to let the suffering poor help themselves? I repeat, what can Society do?"

"Nay," said Blanche, "you can't expect political economy from me. But I cannot help thinking that

in this rich and prosperous country, the governing powers are criminally to blame to permit such a state of things."

"Yes, and the poorer classes too," said Arthur; "are they not improvident in the extreme? Do they make the best even of what they have? Can they cook the food they get? Why, not one working man's wife out of twenty is capable of the commonest duties of a housewife. Soup, for instance, is almost unknown to them; and you see the bricklayer dining on bread and cheese, when for the same money he might enjoy a nourishing meal. Nor do the men cultivate their gardens properly, when they have them. I tell you there are faults on all sides, Blanche."

"They are ignorant, because they are not taught," retorted Blanche; "there is no sympathy between class and class. I really believe that the middle classes are the most selfish and repellent of all. Now," she said, "just look what I do! Look at my poor people. I actually teach them cottage economy, and I help to maintain more than a score. And I'll answer for it, it does not cost you twenty pounds a-year."

"Not if you take it out of your dress money, my love," was the answer, accompanied by a smile of approval.

"And do I not dress well enough to please you?" said Blanche, demurely. "If not, you are harder to please than Lady Madeiraville, who is constantly coming for patterns to your little wife, and who declares that somehow she can never get anything so

well made as my dresses, though I positively cut out the last six for her with my own hands."

"Hem!" observed Aubrey, "I suspect that you must lend her something more than patterns, before she can rival you in dress."

"What is that?" demanded Blanche, who knew perfectly well the reply that would follow.

"The most enchanting figure in Christendom," replied her husband, passing his hand round the waist of his beautiful wife, who looked radiant with innocent delight.

"Oh! if you always love me thus!" murmured Blanche.

We will not follow Aubrey in his impassioned declarations that he must, should, and would; and never possibly could, help loving her with a love so great that it was beyond increase, and yet which time would augment with a cube-rate multiplying power. After this blazing bouquet of protestations had irradiated the serene fancy of Blanche, as some gorgeous display of divine pyrotechny the calm quietude of a summer evening sky, it gradually died away, leaving her mental atmosphere from zenith to horizon flooded with roseate effulgence, and suffusing her cheeks with the warmest blushes of delight. These insensibly paled down to the wonted delicacy of the shell-like hue of her complexion, as the pair resumed their every-day and wordly conversation, with the gratifying, but by no means original remark on the part of Aubrey, that he did not think there was a happier fellow in the world than himself.

"And yet," he said, "things don't go very well

with me in the way of fortune, and that sort of thing. Somehow," he said, "I seem to pay more for everything than anybody else. If I get into a lawsuit, it don't matter what the case is, I am sure to lose; I am constantly being robbed and done by everybody; and as to economising, I find whenever I do try it, that I am always let into some greater and unexpected expense."

At this last remark Blanche smiled. "And pray, my dear," she said, "when did you ever try to economise?"

"Why, I rode home on an omnibus from Kensington the other day," replied Arthur, gravely, "and gave the conductor a sovereign instead of a shilling. I came from Oxford last Tuesday, second-class, and lost my purse, and what is more, it always happens so, somehow."

"Then pray," said Blanche, "avoid such absurd economies in future. I really think it serves you right. It is all very well for a millionaire, or a miser; but why should a gentleman do such things?"

"Then you don't think a millionaire can be a gentleman?" inquired Aubrey.

"Not easily," was the reply. "Only think of that horrid Mr. Moneysworth. Such persons are always as offensive as the gnome king in a pantomime. I think Midas must have been an extremely vulgar and fussy fellow. How odious he made himself to Apollo; and that other rich example, Cræsus, must have been a very offensive personage with his treasures and his wealth. Men with such enormous means are scarcely ever gentlemen, and you know

what the Bible says of a rich man's chance of redemption."

"Then," interrupted Arthur, "you would only admit gentlemen into heaven?"

"Something like it, I confess," answered Blanche; "gentlemen in spirit. They may be coal-heavers, for all I know or care, not 'gentlemen' like George IV.; but those of nature's type. What does some old writer beautifully say about the Saviour Himself? 'That He was the first and truest gentleman that ever lived,' or to that effect."

"Well," resumed Aubrey, "I suppose I must pay a tribute to Fortune in something. Did you ever hear the story told by Herodotus, about Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos? His good fortune was so extraordinary that he got frightened—I think he must have had some such a darling beauty of a wife as you—no, that he couldn't, but something approaching it, I mean—and everything succeeded with him, so he threw a most costly ring into the sea, and a fish swallowed it, and was caught and cooked for his dinner, and thus he got it back again, and then he despaired, for he knew the gods must be meditating some great coup against him, and at length his luck turned all at once, and he went to the 'demnition bow-wows,' as Mr. Mantalini says. At any rate, I hope I need not fear that. Look at that trial the other day, Aubrey *versus* Learyclod. There was an old vagabond who ruined his farm and shamefully despoiled the place. I had got a verdict for eight hundred pounds, when the defendant's counsel, my own friend Salfort—cleverly retained against me, although I instructed

those precious country solicitors, Messrs. Adderfang and Badderogue, especially to make sure of him—discovered a flaw in the pleadings drawn by Browning, the first pleader in England. Consequently, he moved for a new trial, and then I was advised by my solicitors, that the fellow was not only dying, but on the verge of bankruptcy. Adderfang said, that under the circumstances, they would forego their own costs, and so I consented to stop proceedings. And what is the result? Learyclod has taken another and much larger farm, and looks as hearty as one of his own prize-bullocks, and Adderfang shot his own toe off when rabbit-shooting; and died of mortification, I suppose, because he couldn't bring an action for damages against himself; and his partner now repudiates his agreement, and I have to pay three hundred and fifty pounds odd, besides losing my damages. Now I must say that Phil Cousens would have managed matters better than that."

"I don't know," said Blanche. "Look at the recovery of your father's debts. I mean all that Pettingall has left you to recover; and the horse case with that dreadful dealer, whom you put as you said on his mettle and conscience, to furnish you with a horse for me, telling him that you would give him his own price; but that you wanted it in a hurry, and to have no trouble. You said he would not cheat *you*, because you had dealt with him at Camford, and taken his son out hunting with you, his first season, when he was a little boy in a round jacket. I do believe that horse represented all the known maladies in farriery, and all the vices of the manege. It was

like one of those demon ponies in Irish fairy-tales—a veritable Phooka. Master Cousens did not bring that to a very happy conclusion; any more than he paid you for smashing your mail-phaeton and laming poor Dinah, when you lent them to him so very much against your will and better judgment.”

“Why, you little rogue,” said Aubrey, “you are impeaching my wisdom and superiority of judgment, by narrating all these disasters.”

Blanche sighed, in spite of herself. She feared sensibly that her husband’s generous and confiding nature would some day or other seriously impair, if it did not ruin his fortune. She only felt for him, not herself, should such sad results accrue from his easy nature, and, it must be said, uncalculating and reckless improvidence. How little was he capable of enduring poverty and its concomitants!

“Ah!” she uttered aloud, concealing these dismal forebodings, “it matters little to me about these things. I care only on your account if they vex and annoy you, and darken your opinion of the world and its denizens. There is but one thing I value, one jewel that I shrine in my heart of hearts—your love. Were I deprived of that, I would not wish to live; nay, I would not survive it.”

“You do not mean to say you would kill yourself?” inquired Arthur, smiling.

“There would be no need of that,” replied Blanche.

“Come! come!” said her husband, “don’t let us talk so dismally. I shall have you maintaining the theory that suicide is permissible next, under certain circumstances.”

“And is it not?” inquired Blanche, “if one has nothing left in this world to live for?—I dare say it is very wicked to say and feel so; but according to my ideas, there are circumstances against which it is impossible to struggle and to live.”

“My dear love,” said Aubrey, gravely, “no possible earthly contingency can justify any one in laying violent hands upon the life given by Providence. Tell me one if you can.”

“I could give you a dozen,” answered Blanche. “The first, if you ceased to love me.”

“That is impossible,” replied Arthur. “Continue with the remaining eleven.”

“Imagine,” said Blanche, “a patriotic victim to despotic tyranny, such as exists now in Naples; a man who had conspired against the government under cruelties and enormities, when, as Schiller says, an appeal alone remains to the justice of Heaven, and the sword becomes lawful—imagine such a man, devoted to his country, cast into a dungeon on suspicion, and tortured to induce him to reveal the names of his friends and relatives implicated in the plot—if plot you can call that, which is the vindication of outraged manhood, and the sacred rights of citizenship and domestic life. Think, if after the first day’s horrible sufferings on the rack inflicted by some fiendish tribunal of priestly assassins, he felt that his powers were failing, and that the secret which he prized far more than life would be wrenched from his agonising lips, and that on the morrow he might, as it were, involuntarily and unconsciously betray his beloved associates and dearest friends—his father,

brothers, sons, and the wife of his bosom. Would not that man be justified in restoring his soul, unspotted by the calamity of so hideous a revelation, to the Maker on whom he cried in vain to finish his sufferings, and spare him that dread ordeal again? You are silent. Do you remember the story of the father and his son suspended by a single rope over the side of a precipice, when the former felt that the rope must break with their combined weight, and so, with a parting admonition to his child to hold on, threw up his arms, and fell, rather than risk a dearer life? What! silent again? Would not a prisoner in the hands of the Red Indians, who knew that torture was his certain doom, be justified in anticipating his death? Was not the deed of Guyon, the physician of Marseilles, who dissected the body of a victim of the plague, an act of suicide? Was not——”

“Stop! stop!” interrupted Arthur. “These are noble acts of heroism and self-sacrifice, with the exception of your third instance. If one were about to be tortured by Indians, there would still be hope of aid. You have read your ‘Last of the Mohicans’ to very little purpose, I fear. Besides, there is Captain Mayne Reid, in whose delightful romances a rescue always intervenes at the critical moment. Come! come! you have delighted, but not convinced me, with your eloquence. Again, what comparison is there between the desperation of slighted love, and any one of your examples, I should like to know?”

“And do you think,” returned Blanche, “that any torture which inhuman ingenuity could devise, could

excel or equal the pangs I should endure were you to slight or deceive my love?"

"Upon my word," said her husband, "you frighten me. Suppose you were to take it in your head to become jealous on mistaken grounds? You might rush headlong at a conclusion and take poison, you know, and find out your error too late."

"I should at least die comparatively happy if I discovered myself mistaken," rejoined Blanche.

"You really alarm me with these ideas of yours," said Aubrey; but, in truth, he did not look half so much alarmed as flattered by these expressions of his wife's love.

Alas! what a dangerous thing it is to entertain or to inspire such love, i.e., if there is a chance of the beloved object proving unworthy, or of becoming unworthy of it oneself. And who can say what changes may occur in human life, whose very essence is change? Of one thing we are certain, which is this, that it is better for both man and woman to conceal rather than display the full extent of passionate attachment, the hidden fountain in the inner court of the temple of their love. And this especially holds good with the latter. The two greatest safeguards to a man's love—next to his children, if he have any—are vanity and the excitement of doubt. A man is vain of the possession of a beautiful woman, to whom others pay court. We are also apt to cherish most enduringly that, of the possession of which we do not feel quite assured, and which we feel that there is a possibility we may some day lose, if we cease to bestow on it the utmost care and attention. It is

actually true that, in cases of early disappointed love, there have been instances of greater and more continuous devotion to the shadow, than the substance; to the joyless memory, than the fruition of love. There are exceptions, of course, to this worldly theory; and as some, we fear, will term it, this libertine rule. But how rare is the union of two matched together in equal wealth of love, lasting and perennial; how seldom is it, either where fortunes are suitable or not, that a pair are joined together in that which is, then indeed, "holy" matrimony, whose hearts are set,

Like watches timed for some long perilous trip;
Their voyage, life.

When such matches are made on earth and in heaven, one might well let loose the reins of poetic imagination, and believe that the angel célibataires applaud, if they do not envy, such mortal bliss. Our friends, Arthur and Blanche Aubrey, have made a fair start together. Let us wish them well; for they seem to merit and to enjoy the fairest prospect of lasting happiness.

Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey carried on their philosophical and domestic conversation for some time, as on a former occasion, which we have commemorated. It was nearly three o'clock when they retired to their sleeping apartment. The same moon shone through the window of their luxurious apartment, which irradiated the sleeping face of Kate Darrell, streaming through the casement of her dreary little garret, and lighting with unearthly gleam the mobile workings of her expressive features, as she lay smiling or frowning through her phantasmagoria of changing

and contradictory dreams. Strange, that Aubrey should on that very occasion have narrated to Blanche his rencontres with that "lost and wretched being," as he termed her, as an example of the impossibility, according to his theory, of arresting depravity in its downward career. Strange, that Blanche—gazing with her great liquid eyes at the moon, forming, at that moment, as it were, the apex of a triangle of mysterious sympathy between beings whose lives and histories were so dissimilar, that it seems an insult to connect them even in the melancholy comparison of thought—should have shivered as she did, and turned cold.

"I feel," she said to her husband, "at the mention of that frail wreck of humanity, a sort of mingled dread and horror mingled with compassion which I can scarcely express. Do not laugh at so odd a fancy; but I seem to have a dim and indistinct sort of dream-like notion, as if I myself had once wandered in the wet and dreary streets without hope in heaven or home on earth."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Arthur, "you have sat up too late, and the fire is getting low. Let me mix you a glass of negus. You are trembling all over, I declare."

"Did you ever hear that superstition," inquired Blanche, in a half-dreamy, absent manner, "about some one walking over our graves, when a sudden cold shiver, like this, has seized us, we know not why?"

"You little goose," was Aubrey's answer, as he tenderly folded her in his arms, and imprinted a kiss

on her spotless brow, "one would think you had been gossiping with a monthly nurse," and he laughed, but not merrily, at the conceit. "Here, dip your rosy beak in this, little love-bird!" and he playfully extended to her the not unwelcome glass of negus, in which he had been dissolving the sugar with a most determined air. "And now 'To bed, to bed, cries sleepy head!'" Let us attend them to the door, and lock up this pair of puppets also in our chest, not to be drawn forth again for three years of human happiness and woe.

CHAPTER XX.

SWELLS ON THE PROWL.

And silly, soulless, but patrician faces
 Of libertines. Ah! maddened, curst career—
 Mistaking ever for the frolic Graces
 The tawdry Thyads round slain Reason's bier.

THE moon shone on, undimmed even by a passing cloud; she went through no ceremony, however brief, of taking the veil that night in the blue and frosty sky, while the stars glittered in their courses, bright witnesses in the memory of Time.

On sin and sorrow, on joy and revelry, on the unconscious sleeper and the prowling thief, on deeds of murder and rapine, on the watcher in the fold, the student in his lonely room, on the agonising face of the swimmer sinking beneath the waves, on forests of chimneys, on masts and trees, on the countless ripple of the heaving deep, on the dead and dying in the battle-field, whose bristling limbs and contorted agonies looked like a rehearsal of the day of resurrection, when fire and dust, and the pulverised worms of buried ages are to render up and disgorge their

prey, and life is to take form again ; on breathing thought and on slumber, on rock and fountain, on mountain-top and gorge, on valley and spire, island and desert, graveyard and hamlet, on monumental effigies and painted semblances of mankind, that pale moon shone alike, sometimes adding horror, and sometimes beauty to the scene. Look where she silvers the old lawyer's hoary head, and touches with tender grace the powdered features of the courtesan, till the pallor of dissipation melts into the expression of a saint. See how she floods yonder ruins with glory, and fringes with soft radiance the outlines of that desolate wreck. She is not treacherous and deceitful—accuse her not ; for the tides of human passion ebb and flow with wilder and more uncertain motion than the tides of ocean charging along the shifting sands, and rolling along the rocky channels of the impetuous firth. She illumines with mocking ray the desecrated memorial over the fallen soldier's grave ; but what sent him thither to die ? The cruel instincts and tyrannous ambition of his fellow-man ! She gilds the dark cypress of yon cemetery chequered with white tombstones ; but she lends no coldness to the hearts which help to people it with the victims of desertion and neglect. She rather fills the soul of the stranger with tenderness and silent ruth, as he lingers to gaze around him in the mysterious beauty of her hallowing light.

Behold, where from a choice reunion of jovial wits and *litterateurs* of the period rolls the portly form of the great Mr. Stingray towards his chambers in Waterloo-place ! He chuckles over the recollec-

tion of the last spiteful thing he had said, to damp the ardour of a young artist painfully struggling with difficulties and ill-health. He nods familiarly to the chaste planet, as if she were a familiar acquaintance of his; some duchess, or courtesan of distinction, guiding her equipage in the Hyde Park of the skies. "Ah! old girl," he mutters, kissing the tips of his fingers, "you are shining in full force to-night." Had the moon looked seedy and out of luck, we verily believe that Mr. Stingray would have cut her in his semi-drunken snobbishness, so complete a worshipper of prosperity and success was our estimable friend. "I wonder," quoth he to himself, "how the deuce that ass Aubrey contrives to spend so much coin. One thing is certain, it can't last. Confound the beast, I should like to see him come down in the world, with his select parties, and that precious sentimental piece of goods he has picked up and married. I must find out who she was. She had no money, that I know; for Cousens, the flashy one of those two queer customers of solicitors of his, told me as much. Let's see, I've dined there three times this month. Every dinner must have cost him thirty pounds, if it cost a penny. And he thinks he does it very fine, *à la Russe*, forsooth. He must load his confounded table with *épergnes* full of flowers and fruit, and sport a French chef, must he? I could hardly see my *vis-à-vis* for the absurd display; and the best thing I said all the evening was lost in consequence, after I had led up to it so beautifully. As for her, I should like to meet her begging in the

streets." This was said apropos of a poor creature asking him for a trifle. "If you are not off," he said, fiercely, "I'll call a policeman. Go to——! I am glad they invited me for Thursday," he continued; "because the Duke of Chalkstoneville will be there. I like to talk to him. He's so deaf; it's an excuse for speaking loud. Every one listens, and some tyro says, 'That's the witty Stingray, who writes those clever things in the "Scorpion."' Ha! ha! I declare I never saw a brighter moon in Italy. Aubrey's wife looks like an Italian. Quite a classic face, as that odious Sir Bullfrog Leapfrog said. I wonder whether anything will come of Madeiraville's admiration? I suppose he is not attracted much by the husband's society. Not exactly! I should like to know who is. 'Aubrey *versus* Madeiraville!' what a leading article I would write for the 'Fulminator'! Shouldn't like the fellow to pocket the damages though, unless he really is spoony on her, and then it would only help him on his road to ruin. Then there's that blackguard Luckless, he would do better; because he couldn't pay, and both sides would be sold." At that moment a jovial voice crying, "Holloa, Stingray!" caused him to turn round and perceive the very man who furnished the immediate subject of his thoughts by his side.

"Bless me, Sir Harry! I am delighted to see you—the very last person in my thoughts, 'pon honour! and Hedger Boshleigh, too, I declare! My dear boys! this is fortunate. What say you to a brandy-and-seltzer at the 'ken?'"

“All right, old boy!” was the response. “Here’s Boshleigh was just saying he should like to look in somewhere.”

Mr. Boshleigh was an artist in water-colours, whose affectation was only equalled by the utter hollowness and selfishness of his character. Under the guise of extreme frankness, he did not trouble himself to conceal this. He declared himself to be what he really was; perhaps in the hope that such astonishing candour would not be credited. He would help himself in the most jocose manner to the larger portion of a delicacy, or drink two glasses to his neighbour’s one, at dinner, and boast of it in the most open and cordial manner. If you asked him to dinner, and he did not come, he would own that he had met some one in the interim, who had tempted him with better fare.

“Like you, very much!” he would say, with a coarse laugh; “but couldn’t resist turtle, you know. Don’t get turtle every day—dine with you to-morrow, old fellow!”

He would tell you how he cut an old friend, because he was going down in the world. “Can’t afford to know a man who might want to borrow a ‘fiver’—shouldn’t like to refuse a friend a ‘fiver,’ and you see, I never have one to spare. Wish I had—wouldn’t be such a fool as to lend ’em, though. What do you think happened to me last Christmas Day?” he was once heard to say. “Dined with family, and all that—carved the turkey—lots of nephews and nieces—helped them all, and slipped a nice lot of tit-bits on one side of dish under the lee of turkey. Saw

youngest nephew eating as if he would choke himself. The confounded young rascal timed it exactly to the moment when I had finished helping all round, and then shoved in his plate for more—was going to cut him a drumstick. ‘Thank ye, uncle,’ said the young viper; ‘I’ll just take those brown bits on the other side!’ Should like to have carved him for a select party of New Zealanders. Never wished so much to be rich, that I might have cut him out of my will, and let his parents know it.” Amongst other things, Boshleigh had been studying “art” at Florence, where he made Stingray’s acquaintance. They knew, hated, and respected each other. Boshleigh spoke of Stingray in a gushing manner, and called him “that dear creature, all heart, sir!” “Qual cuore!” he would say; for, amongst other things, Boshleigh would bore you with his execrable Italian, spoken in the loudest tone. Stingray was generally said to talk a great deal from his heart. But then, what a heart it was to talk from. Boshleigh was always speaking of “La bella Firenze,” and “Roba di Roma,” and “Albano,” and “Trasteverini,” and “una bellissima ragazza,” or “una donna graziosa, bell’ assai!” he would drawl out. And this sort of thing imposed upon some persons, as every piece of pachydermatous impertinence of self-assertion does, more or less. Stingray knew and appreciated his man, but never said anything spiteful of Boshleigh, whose good word, perhaps, he valued; for the fellow had a dry, caustic touch of ironical humour about him, that sometimes told, especially when he was backbiting any one to whom he owed an obligation, and these were not few.

"I never did him any kindness," said an eminent judge once in our hearing, of some one who had said an ill-natured thing of him; "why should he hate me?"

The trio went on conversing towards the Haymarket. On the way Stingray tried to draw out Sir Harry Luckless about Mrs. Aubrey; but to the surprise of that sapient man of the world, with very little success, or, rather, with marked failure. In fact, Luckless talked much more like a gentleman than is common among the well-dressed libertines of the present cynical and unchivalrous period.

"I'll tell you what it is, Stingray," said the fast young baronet, who was by no means usually fastidious in his conversation, "she's an angel, by —, and I don't care to hear you talk of her in that sort of way; and what's more, I won't stand it from any man, and now you know."

So saying, he withdrew his arm from that of the wit, who had some difficulty in pacifying him.

"Why, Luckless, what on earth has come over you?" inquired Stingray, somewhat disconcerted. "You're not the sort of fellow to take these things in earnest. I only said——"

"I don't care what you said," retorted Sir Harry; "I don't care to hear even her name mentioned in this atmosphere. She's too good for any of us to know or talk about."

"E superb' assai!" drawled out Boshleigh, "non ho mai veduto una—una——" Here he stuck, his Italian vocabulary being at fault.

"Come, come," quoth Stingray; "since it is such

an earnest case with Luckless, we had better take care, and so had Aubrey——”

“Ha! ha!” interrupted the incorrigible Boshleigh; “il marito, hay? yaas, he had better look out, and study the horn-book of matrimony. Luckless is a dangerous admirer. But you’ve no chance against Chalkstoneville. A duke, you know, caro mio! even with the gout, and deaf as a post—he don’t find others deaf—it is long odds, even against Sir Harry Luckless. Fancy the old sinner making love, saying something very insinuating, and putting up his ear-trumpet for the blushing response. How I should like to drop the tea-caddy on his toes, or a marble paper-weight, or any other little trifle of the kind.”

“His grace,” said Stingray, “always reminds me of the beadle of Burlington Arcade, especially on a drawing-room day, except at one particular time.”

“When may that be?” asked Bosleigh.

“When I pass by the Arcade,” returned Stingray, “and then the beadle reminds me of him.”

“Arcades ambo,” said Boshleigh; “but the beadle has the advantage in one thing. He is not deaf like the other shepherd.”

“No,” replied Stingray, “or else he would lose his situation, whereas the duke would continue to hold his, were he blind and dumb into the bargain. The beadle, too, holds himself more erect; and is altogether a superior specimen of humanity, and his moral character is unimpeachable, or how could he be respected as a beadle? Besides which, he is the

son of his parents, or at least reputed so to be. But the duke is the duke with fifty thousand pounds a-year, after all, and therefore is fifty thousand times a better man, without counting the title."

The speaker would have fawned, lied, wriggled like a worm or an adder, and sacrificed his greatest benefactor without remorse, to have gained the entrée of Chalkstoneville House, and to have been invited to join the duke's country circle; but, nevertheless, he was truly animated by the contempt which he expressed. Sir Harry, when the talk about the duke had dropped, took the opportunity of informing both of his companions that the conversation was very displeasing to him, involving, as it did, the name of a lady for whom he cherished the most profound admiration.

"I'm with you for the 'ken,'" he said, "or anywhere else you like; but if I hear the name of Mrs. Aubrey even alluded to again, I shall go that instant. Nay more, I shall consider it a personal offence. It is very seldom that I am in earnest about anything; but I am this time, and I must say I think it will be deuced uncivil of you to annoy me, when you see I don't like it. There are plenty of women to talk about I am sure, without dragging in her name."

By this time they had arrived at the door of the "ken," where Sir Harry knocked with his stick; and the porter, after honouring the trio with a stare, the result of which seemed to be satisfactory to his mind, said, "I hope I see you well, gents," and opened the door with a degree of promptitude and decision,

not to say violence, which was highly complimentary to the party.

“Full to-night?” inquired Stingray.

“Stunning!” was the emphatic answer, with which agreeable announcement we will, if our readers allow us, leave these three ornaments of polite and moral life to enjoy, as they may, the intellectual pleasures of the “ken.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GREAT BINSBY.

So great, so soft, so corpulent, so good,
 A very prince of butlers, Spoongrand stood;
 Most butler-like of princees had he been,
 Should we in truth a nobler man have seen;
 Though on our knees we had adored his "place,"
 His "stars," his "garter," and his full fat face?
 No! had our Spoongrand grandest spoon been born,
 Arch table-spoon of gold, not servile horn,
 He still had been himself—the good and great—
 His own bland wisdom murmurs—"Sich is fate!"

MR. BINSBY, P. G. M. of the United Butlers' Branch of the Grand Metropolitan Aid Society for the benefit of the retired veterans of the three "Services," whose seal of office bore a Tir-bouchon "argent," and three folded Doyleys "or" upon a sable Hammercloth, with the motto, "Pro bono publico servimus," which some low and evil-minded persons declared meant that the chief aim and ambition of the members of the confraternity was to obtain some time or other the goodwill of a public-house—Mr. Binsby, the great, bland, and dignified ruler of the house of Aubrey, which he honoured by his (ad) ministration, sat in state in his well-worn

arm-chair, at the head of the supper-table of the male and female functionaries of the various departments of domestic economy in that establishment.

It was the same night on which we have introduced our readers to the parlour of the worthy Mr. Pettin-gall in Thames-street, the villa of the benevolent Grindery in the Grove of the Evangelist, the Circean orgies of the Escorial, the dingy attic of Kate Darrell in Achilles'-buildings, the drawing-room tête-à-tête of Arthur Aubrey and his enchanting wife, and lastly the Corinthian promenade of Mr. Stingray and his friends in the vicinity of the Haymarket.

Mr. Binsby may be described as of genus homo, species cork-drawer, ordo magnificent. He was a wonderful specimen of his class. His stature was lofty, his chin double, his whiskers *cotelettes de mouton* in style and cut, his chest expansive, *à la* pouter pigeon, his flesh soft, his voice sonorous, and his manner calm and impressive. His appearance, on taking the air when the hall-door was open, was so extremely awe-inspiring, that his very look has been known to scare away mischievous urchins, and to cause a showman who had commenced the usual preliminaries of that popular entertainment "Punch," suddenly to shoulder his peripatetic theatre, and like Longfellow's Arabs, with their folded tents, to

As silently steal away.

He once frightened a sensitive little washerwoman's girl, who mistook the house, and whose evil fate prompted her to ring the visitors' bell, to such an extent, that she went home and was subject to epileptic

fits, until she attained the age of sixteen. Not that there was anything savage or ogre-like about Mr. Binsby—far from it; but there was something awful in the concentration of so much conscious importance in so fine a man. Imagine a whole civic Corporation looking out of one pair of eyes from an aristocratic doorstep, and you have some notion of the mesmeric influence exercised by such a personage over the poor and timid. But Mr. Binsby would have been imposing in any sphere of life! What a pity, for the honour of England, that he was not Lord Mayor of London, in some year of particular fraternisation with our Gallic neighbours. What an effect he would have created in Belgium! As it is, we are constrained to send over some little civic Mouldy, Wart, or Feeble, some absolutely thin and absurdly insignificant being, as the representative of that Gogmagogic Majesty, which is supposed to lock the gates of Temple Bar, and which once struck Wat Tyler to the ground. This had led to awkward and perplexing mistakes. On one occasion the quaint, old, gilded Mansion House post-boy, or Guildhall jockey, was seized, *nolens volens*, just as he was about to seek refreshment amongst his compeers, and borne in triumph by a gesticulating crowd of Mossoos to the chair of honour at the royal fête. Could this have happened, Binsbio duce—had Binsby been mayor? Never! we say emphatically. It could not have been!

True, there are beings in England, so roughly nurtured, and so coarsely constituted, that they reverence nothing truly great, and worship no divinity at all. There are boys who have no respect for

beadles; there are youths who chaff the Life Guards in their own sentry-boxes; there are persons who laugh aloud at the apron of a bishop, and would pick the pocket of a Commissioner of Lieutenancy for the City of London in full uniform, or of a peer in his robes, if they could only get at it. And to crown all, there are godless and profane wretches who would remain unawed even by the Binsbian aspect in its severest phase. There was a Hansom cabman, who on departing from the door, after depositing a guest, facetiously asked that great man, if he didn't feel weak about the knees with supporting so much dignity. There was a newspaper boy, who having been reading in the "Family Herald" an account of the habits of the cetaceous tribe, stood grinning at a safe distance, and propounded the inquiry to Binsby himself, whether he often came up to the surface to blow off his steam! There was a young vagabond, who belonged to a neighbouring dispensary, who asked him in allusion to his complexion, and a certain puffiness of flesh which certainly did characterise him (as it latterly did the great Napoleon), if he wasn't weaned upon muffins; and finished by a positive assertion that he was the original fat boy in "Pickwick," grown to manhood since that inimitable publication first came out.

On these—as we are glad to record they were—rare and exceptional occasions, Binsby would slam the door with a solemn severity which never degenerated into violence, and simply withdraw himself from the vulgar gaze. It was like the august retirement of the hippopotamus in the Zoological Gardens to his

inner apartment, when a bushel of shelled marrowfats wouldn't tempt him forth to take a plunge for the gratification of the plebeian throng. Plebeian, did we say? The Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, might pine for that sullen and ponderous presence, in vain. On the occasion to which we have just ventured an allusion, Binsby felt that had he been a mere Piccadilly beadle, he might have sought vengeance; but that as a Belgravian butler, he could only pity and despise such ignorance. Mr. Binsby, as a rule, never hurried himself. Scurrying and bustling were the chief of all things in the world which he disliked. Only once was he known to manifest some symptoms of haste, and that was to escape from a house where the people had evinced decidedly low habits; in fact, where the mistress had actually upon one occasion entered the kitchen unannounced, and the master forgot himself so far as to keep duplicate keys of the cellar. "I felt myself quite out of my spear," he remarked—a favourite mode of expression of his—"and I acted according to the emergency of the situation." Mr. Binsby's favourite study was heraldry. Not that he read much, considering as he did such an occupation, with the exception of glancing over the "Morning Post" every morning, rather derogatory to his dignity than otherwise. He had no respect for literature, as a profession. "It isn't that authors don't make much money," he said; "officers in the army is seldom rich, unless they turn their uniform to a good account in the way of marriage, which I have known some in another branch of the Service do, especially when

their understandings was good" (and here the great man would scan his own legs with complacency); "but the truth is, that literary habits is so doosidly low. I knew an unfortunate party as once moved in a very high spear, in fact he was attached to royalty, until he took to dissipation and lost himself, pore fellow! He came at last to our society for aid, after a parrylitic attack, and he told me confidentially, that he had on one occasion actually come down so low as to do duty at an authors' club. Reduced as his circumstances were, even he couldn't stand that long. They smoked clay pipes all day long, which is nothing," added Mr. Binsby, reflectively, "when the tobakker's tolerable and 'at prepper times. I sometimes do such a thing myself. Even the clergy don't always object to their churchwardens" (and at this feeble joke he indulged in a genteel laugh). "But these literary fellers were by no means pertickler as to what they smoked, according to my friend; and was fond of rattling coppers in their pockets, and there was not one of them that put on a clean shirt a day, and didn't ink the table-cloth, which no gentleman could endure. They were mostly all of them Radicals, too, he said, and their conversation was blasphemymious in the heggstream. Now, if I have a weakness" (and here Mr. Binsby would smile, as if the notion of *his* having a weakness were something which the world would hardly admit, even at his own suggestion) "it is for clean linen, and if I've a respect, it's for the distinctiuns of Socierty." These were doubtless some of the reasons for which he did not immerse himself deeply and devotedly in the study

and science of the "belles lettres." Possibly, too, in early life, his continual attendance on the bell had interfered with his application to letters. His knowledge of heraldry was therefore somewhat confined and peculiar. Still he had an extensive knowledge of the crests and devices of various families. Panels of carriages, and the hatchments of deceased noblemen, furnished him with constant objects of contemplation and means of enjoyable acquirement. And considering that the family of Binsby was not ancient in a genealogical point of view, whatever might be said to the contrary, and although it was true in the vulgar and facetious view of a Tennyson, that he might be descended from the "grand old gardener," like the rest of mankind; yet, as he actually was the eldest son of a market-gardener at Peckham, i.e., if his mother did not also deal in "slips," he could scarcely lay claim to an illustrious genealogical tree, or date back his own origin further at least than the first syllable of the Plantagenets.

Probably, had Mr. Binsby's feelings been consulted in relation to science, he would have declared in favour of the congenital theory of species, which is so destructive of the poetical climax of the bard, to which we have referred above. No doubt maternal Binsbian ancestors existed at a very early period, which we are inclined to believe, from a very antique coprolite jaw-bone of an old woman having been found on the family estate of an Irish branch of the "butlers," supposed to have been of cannibal propensities, whose head had evidently been snapped off, and swallowed by one of the antediluvian monsters with

which we are so familiar in the pleasure-grounds of the Crystal Palace, as there was no other portion of the skeleton found near. The deinotherium had evidently made no bones of dining on that progenitress of the Binsby race. Was there not also a portion of the skull of a female found in a Roman kitchen-midden in London Wall, which was palpably that of a cook of the period, whenever that might be, from the culinary fragments which surrounded it, together with an immense quantity of the reliquiæ of the exact varieties of shell-fish to which all the members of the Binsby family are so partial at the present day? Much, it is true, might be advanced by the exponents of an antagonistic theory. But as anthropology is more capable of elucidation, or an opposite process, by separate and successive controversial essays, than by debate or discussion, admitting of answer or refutation on the spot, we invite Professors Huxley and Busk to answer us through the medium, if they please, either of a volume published at their own expense, or of the "Anthropological Review." Only we do not pledge ourselves to read their speculations, as we consider that the jaw-bones of old women might be allowed to remain silent, when they have got below, say, a tertiary crust of that crustiest of old ladies, mother Earth. To recur to our modern Binsby, his parents' real name, it should be mentioned in the course of truth and antiquarian research, was Bugsby, but in whatever respect that might have been held in a mariner's or bargeman's eyes, he felt with reason that such a patronymic was hardly admissible in the "Service" to which he had the honour to belong.

There was great merit, therefore, because great unselfishness in Binsby's administration and study of heraldic lore. It was curious how he quartered himself, as it were, on the shields of the great families with whom he happened to be successively identified in pursuing the duties of his profession. On these occasions, when speaking of their heraldic pretensions, he would say: "We bear a cock rampant on a chevron gules," or "Our motter is 'Nomen et numen,' though what new men has to do with it I must confess I don't exactly see." Or "Our fammerly came in with the Conqueror." Or "This house is of Scotch extraction. We are lineally descended from the Haggis of Haggis, twice hintermarried with the well-known barrownites of Brose." There was something sublime in this elevation to heraldic blazonry and genealogical lore on the part of Binsby, when we consider that he was liable at any time to be compelled to provide himself with a new coat-of-arms at a month's warning. It was touching, when one considered it in all its full-flavoured simplicity and earnest single-mindedness of credulous infatuation. Was it altogether an infatuation? We will not speak of the peculiar genealogical influence occasionally exercised by servitors of the Binsbian mould and stamp in ancient families, in preserving them from extinction, or, what is worse, utter degeneration of body and mind. The stalwart heir of more than one noble house has resembled a stout footman, rather than his noble but effeminate papa. The contemplation and company of robust personages has a physiological as well as moral bearing, highly suggestive it may

be, but no less practical in its consequences and effect. But this is a matter for metaphysical speculation, rather than the pages of a work like this. To pursue, however, another train of thought, must we not admit that the whole science and detail of heraldry depends very much upon faith—upon the belief that you had a great-grandfather, that your great-great-grandmother was chaste, or that she wasn't somebody else? Would there ever have been a pedigree sought out and published of the Empress of the French, which pedigree includes in her ancestry Bruce and Wallace, if we mistake not, and nearly every Scottish notability, save Macbeth and the Laird of Cockpen—would, we say, this pedigree ever have existed—if the ancestors did—had not Napoleon III. fallen in love with a certain charming young lady of mingled Spanish and Scottish descent? Of course we do not include the utter and acknowledged fictitious absurdity, so much fostered by the modern system of crested envelopes and stamps, and emblazoned note-paper. The way in which some persons who cannot even boast of a father, but are ashamed to own the honest man, i.e., if he were honest, which they are not, go into this sort of thing, only stationers and engravers, and that erudite body, the Herald's College, can tell. These are the folks who connect their own two names, or two last names, if they have more, or their own and wife's surname, with a hyphen, as Smyth-Wilkins, or Clark-Rogers. If you look for Wilkins in the "Court Guide"—he was only promoted to the Commercial Directory a few years ago—you either don't find him, or it says, "See Smyth-Wil-

kins." His daughter Sarah, formerly "our Sally," drops her final h, and comes out as Sara. "Chi Sarah, Sara!" This is only fair, as her father always supplies an unnecessary h at the beginning of a great many words. It is a habit he acquired at Court—a court in Whitechapel; and no court in Europe can guide him out of it. He may be more fortunate in the next world, for he does already drop it both in heaven and elsewhere.

To revert to the real humbug, the true genuine absurdity. Was not Binsby—if we could imagine him in *cuervo*, with his mutton-chop whiskers developed into the full bushy luxuriance of a beard—as proper a man as was ever depicted in the form of a supporter of the most gorgeous emblazonment? Was there not lately a picture in the South Kensington Portrait Gallery, representing a worthy of the Elizabethan era, the exact similitude of *the* Binsby, at present connected with the Aubrey family? There was, to the very trick of the judicial beetling eyebrows, and the exact over-lapping droop of his majestic jowl. We ourselves believe that the world has never been without a Binsby, since the time of ancient Babylon the Great, and probably for ages before that comparatively recent period in the history of mankind. We can imagine a Binsby, chief-butler to Pharaoh, telling his dream to Joseph, the boy in buttons of that Semitic establishment, surrounded by the culinary hieroglyphics of an Egyptian servants' hall. The only inconsistency of our friend lay in the transfer of the Binsbian interest from one family to another, together with his mercenary allegiance.

But in this he only followed the example of the great families from whom he, or any one else, might happen to claim descent.

After all, it was but a sort of new quartering on his shield ; his pantry displayed a collection of all the coats-of-arms he had ever borne, or helped to bear, in the vicissitudes of the noble families he had known. Such a man, sober, unmarried, Protestant, and chaste—severe, yet bland ; proud, but courted ; stately, and affable ; weighing sixteen stone seven, yet treading softly in his well-polished pumps—was the august autocrat, reminding one of Vespasian rather than Nero, of Trajan rather than Caligula, of Alexander Comnenus rather than Commodus, who ruled over the destinies of the Lower Empire of No. —, Queen's-square, at the exact period of which we speak.

This great man, then, was sitting in his arm-chair awaiting supper on the evening which we have sought to immortalise, when the following conversation took place. But as Binsby deserves a whole chapter, ay, though it were of the most high and puissant Order of the Garter, to himself, we will leave him thus photographed in the memory of our readers, a “thing of beauty,” and “a joy for ever,” and proceed in our next chapter to display him mingled and confused with the lesser personages who derived second-hand lustre and dignity from his magnificent presence.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SECOND SALLE-A-MANGER OF THE FAMILLE
AUBREY.

When I thinks of the traps as I've driven, the bar-parlours as I've set in, the wager-dinners as I've eat, and the glasses round as I've had a share in, I says—"What is life?"—*After-midnight Soliloquy of a Commercial Traveller.*

"I WONDER," quoth Mrs. Susan, Blanche Aubrey's maid, to Mr. Tops, Arthur Aubrey's groom, as they sat conversing in 'the servants' hall, on the memorable night when the events took place which we have narrated in the preceding chapters—"I wonder that missus and master don't leave this racketing London to the fine folks that is fit to live in it, and take some delightful place in the country. I am sure if I was them, I wouldn't stay in town a day longer, and missus is so fond of flowers."

"Did you hever 'appen to know a swell as did hexackly what he liked, or what he was cut out special for by Natur, Susan?" observed Mr. Tops.

After saying this much he paused for a reply; and then quaffed a draught of his supper beer in a manner that would have created envy in a blasé aristocrat hesitating between champagne-cup, or any other ex-

pensive compound, languidly unable to excite his too frequently indulged and consequently vitiated taste.

Mr. Tops paused for a reply, but getting none, continued his observations.

"Cos if you did, I never did, and that's hall about it."

"Really, Mr. Tops," said the lady's lady at last, "I can't say that such an idea did ever strike me. I should think that 'swells,' as you call them, are just the people who did follow their own fancies."

"It's the loikes of we," observed Jane, the housemaid, a fine buxom Staffordshire girl, with hair of the hue which has since become so fashionable, "as is obligated, in a manner of speaking, to do as we oughtner to be obligated no how. Look how sarvints is worrited. If I wanted to go furren now, do you suppose I'd get a chance? In course I don't want to do no such a thing. It don't seem much like England, as it is, in a place where a French man-cook is kep."

"Well, I must say," remarked Susan, "that Monseer Isidore keeps himself very much to himself, and I don't see that we have any call to complain of his company."

Miss Jane tossed her head, and made a remark to the effect that, for her part, she thought the mounseer rather resembled a murderer at Madame Tussaud's Exhibition than a person who ought to cook victuals for an English family. The fact is, that poor M. Isidore had been rather captivated by the rustic fair one, who expressed her scorn of her admirer, like a true coquette of her class and condition.

The great Binsby had been revolving the proposition of Tops, and was so absorbed by it as to pay no attention to the remarks of the women. At length the oracle spoke; and the whole kitchen, animate and inanimate, from the dish-cover laid down by Betty, the scullery-maid, to the cat which ceased to pass her paw over her ears, and sat solemnly blinking round, from page to spectacled housekeeper, from the elegant Susan to the flippant Tops, seemed suddenly impressed with awe, and to come as it were to attention.

“There’s a deal in what Mr. Tops has observed,” said the great man, at length. “I’ve been a many years in the ‘Service,’ and I’ve seen, I may say, a sight of tip-top company in my time, and what’s the conclusion I’ve arrived at?” (Pause.) “The conclusion is, that masters is masters of everything, except their own wishes, and their own affairs, generally, including in a meejority of cases their missuses; and that servants is servants, and *as* such is called upon to act according. Now I never did hardly know a gentleman as did act according. If he’s rich, he wants to be richer; if he’s in society he wants to better that society; he’s always trying to do something beyond himself like, and a imitating his neighbours in a manner that is very unbecoming. If *he* don’t think it, his wife says, ‘My dear, the Smythes gave clear turtle as well as thick, last week at that dinner of theirs, and we only had thick; or they had four extra waiters, and we only had three,’ and so she puts him on to outdo the Smythes. Of course, I’m talking of them as spend their fortunes, and not of

the mean-sperritted creatures as spend no fortune at all, and saves all their money for somebody who wishes 'em dead, and don't thank 'em even for dying, when they've got it. That's not according to any sort of living. They are to be pitied, they are. But as for saying that any gentlefolks live as they like, or where they like, or how they like, of course I know better."

"O cri! Muster Binsby," interrupted the boy in buttons, "wouldn't I like to be a gentleman, and wouldn't I jest 'ave a rare blow out whenever I felt peckish, and go reg'lar to the theayter."

"Hold your tongue, you young himp of hevil," was the majestic man's reply. It must be reluctantly admitted that even Binsby himself, when exasperated, aspirated his h's, and was apt to forget his Lindley Murray. "A gentleman," resumed Mr. Binsby, "may say, 'next year I'll do so and so,' but does he do it? Of course he don't, and if he tried ever so, his friends and relations wouldn't let him. Some has daughters to be married, and some has sons to start in life, and all is slaves to Society, and fashion, and circumstances, and what they call their circle of acquaintance and the world. I tell you their lives is all a imposition, from family prayers before breakfast, to counting the bottles of wine that's been drunk after the last guest has gone, and a blessing with him, which is sure to be some very shy gent who's been standing in doorways and corners all the evening, and has warmed up unpleasantly by drinking half tumblers of wine after supper."

"Well, Mr. Binsby," cut in Tops, "I'm sure

you can't accuse our guv'nor of that kind of game. He don't count his bottles. He's the wrong sort to go for to do such a thing."

"Nor I didn't want to, young man," replied the butler, whose words gurgled with solemnity and slowness, like the contents of a thick bottle of port. "I was illustrating life in its various faces, and I was jest a going to observe, when you whipt up my plate, as I may say, before I'd done, which is not the practice in the spear I'm accustomed to, that our young people behave themselves, according, as much as any that ever I served with, and I would give them an excellent character to any gentleman of my acquaintance. Not wishing to detract from their merits, I must say that Arthur Aubrey, Esquire, is not rich enough, in my opinion, to venture on mean and dishonourable actions. It's only a nobleman or a banker who can afford to count the wax candle-ends after an out-and-out fashionable cram. I've known a bishop do it; but then they can do anything short of cold meat on Sundays. But if you mean to say, any of you, that our young folks up-stairs follow their own inclinations, and do what they feel inclined to do, I dissent entirely from your preposition, and consider your views unphilosophic and shaller."

"It's as true as gospel," eagerly remarked the housemaid Jane; "I believe, if it wasn't for what other folks say, missus would be as nateral as one of we. As it is, she can't go outside the door without a lot of preparation and rubbish, and Mr. William here to follow after her, as stately as a funeral, or else the carridge. She isn't half so gay and light-

some, I've heerd Susan here say, as she was before marriage; for all she was a governess, and loves our young master."

The butler frowned at this allusion. It was clear that he didn't like any allusion to a fact so detrimental to the dignity of one of the "young people's" antecedents.

"When I was used to take the cheer in the hall of the Reform Club," he said, "I'd a deal of time for reflection on the life of the harristocrisy and upper classes. And the conclusion I arrived at is, that they've a deal more care and a good deal less pleasure, than some that occupies a different spear altogether. I allude particularly to gentlemen of my own perfession. We have, I may say, a wider choice of life and observation. Of course, I speak of gents only that is settled and married. There isn't a worse set of slaves in Europe, or Ameriky, for that matter, than people moving in Society. From morning to night, and abed for all I know, they're always thinking what some one else will say about them. If a man daren't eat peas with a knife, or drink beer with his dinner, or enjoy an apple on his own doorstep, that is, if he is minded to, is that liberty? If he's got a dozen horses in the stable, can he ride any one of them he likes?" A shake of the head from Tops. "Isn't he obliged to be sweltering in London in the hottest month of the year, or to close his windows and his shutters if he don't leave town? Mustn't he dress for dinner, whether he likes it or not, and does he get the best of what's to eat and drink in his own house?" Approval all round. "And mustn't both he and his

wife receive visitors, and be civil to them, when they'd as leave take as much physic, or poison, for the matter of that? What folks don't like—if they're ever so fashionable—they're always ruining themselves to purchase, and what they'd like to have, they never can somehow by any means afford. All they can afford is show and pretence, and such like. But if they'd the heart to do good, and I believe a many has, only it's invisible, and we can't see it, are they ever in a position to do it? They've got to give lots of money in charities, as isn't charity at all, to my mind; but if the wife says to the husband, 'My dear, there's our poor cousin Robert starving for want of bread,' what's the answer? 'We must look at home, my dear. I can assure you, we're living above our means.' And so they all are; except, as I said, the poor pitiful creatures that don't live at all. And that's the chief secret of the unhappiness which I feel myself called upon to testimonialise to as a veteran in the Service."

Having delivered himself of this speech, Mr. Binsby looked around for approval, and applied himself assiduously to the leg of a pheasant.

"It's all very true, sir, doubtless, what you say," said the footman, a nice quiet young man, who had just joined, as Mr. Binsby would have called it, and who had a profound respect for his senior officer and commandant, "and I don't mean for a moment to contradict it; but I should like to try a little of their unhappiness up-stairs, that's what I should. If I was a gentleman, missus is just the sort I should like to be unhappy with."

"If you was one of them," replied Mr. Binsby, with patronising grandeur, "perhaps you'd do as they does. As it is, young man, you only expose your ignorance." Saying which he relapsed into the requisite amount of abstraction required by his agreeable occupation.

"Well," said Tops, "I'm free to confess that it hoften licks me to know what the nob's is a drivin' at. As for master, he don't take 'arf so kind to the stables, since he's been mixed hup with all these swells. Now and agen he do come to smoke his weed of a morning, but what is it? Yesterday he says, 'Tops,' says he, 'the dook says that the little bay 'oss ain't a good match for the t'other. I think I must get a customer for him, Tops.' 'Well,' says I, 'sir, there ain't no dook in Hingland as can find a better-matched pair than them two 'osses. Pr'aps he's arter him hisself.' And that's what, in my opinion, he was arter."

"And that's not all he's after in this establishment," observed Mr. Binsby. "He ought to be ashamed of himself, that's what he ought to be. I should like to tell him a little of my opinion of him. I'll warrant he should hear it for all his deafness."

"Then, there's Sir 'Arry Luckless, he didn't like the colour of our pheayton," continued Tops, "and master's a goin' to have it new painted. I'd see him blowed first, that's what I would. It's hall for want o' summit to say, for I heerd him hadmiring of it to missus like winking. I'd paint him."

"I am sure," said Susan, "that Sir Harry is a very nice, civil-spoken gentleman. It was only last

Tuesday he gave me half a sovereign, and such a nice——” Here she paused and looked down.

“Nice *what?*” cried Tops. “I thought you was a different sorted one.”

“Such a nice smile, to be sure,” continued Susan; “and I’ll just trouble you, Mr. Tops, not to insult me with any of your imperence, if you please. What were you pleased to think he should give me? I’d advise you to keep your insinuations to the stable, and not to trouble me with them. I wish you good evening. I’m going up to missus. I don’t allow no one to insult me, groom nor barrynet.” And, so saying, she swept out of the room.

“There now, you’ve been and done it,” said the housemaid.

“I’ve known a man’s head punched for insulting a respectable young woman like that,” quoth the new footman, between whom and the illiterate Tops a tacit rivalry had already commenced as to which should keep company with pretty Mrs. Susan.

“You’d better come and do it,” said Tops; rising and falling into an attitude that would have done credit to the late Sir Thomas de Sayers of that ilk.

In justice to his rival, we must record that he by no means displayed the white feather. “Oh! if that’s your game, come outside,” he said, “and I’m your man.”

And now the Muses of History and of Song might have to record deeds of desperate valour inspired by Cupid and Bacchus. But a deity appeared “from the machine” worthy of the occasion, and interfered, in the majestic person of the portly Binsby.

“Forbear, rash knights,” he said, or rather didn’t say; but what he said was, “None of this ’ere here, if you please. Mr. Tops, I thought you knew better. As for you, young man, I make every allowance; but just drop it, drop it, I say! Don’t be alarmed, ladies.”

We are bound to observe that this last remark was not uncalled for. The housemaid, in tears, had thrown herself unreservedly into the arms of Tops, and the scullery-maid was alternately blubbering and calling, “Perlice!” while the housekeeper, a staid and silent dame, showed unmistakable symptoms of going into a fit. “Hold your tongue, you owdacious young varmint, or I’ll kick you out of this establishment!” The boy in buttons, to whom this was addressed, had actually ventured to utter the astounding words of “Go it, Tops!” but shrunk away abashed from the imposing Binsbian rebuke.

“Allow me to remind you, gentlemen,” continued the mighty pacificator, with a wave of his hand which approached sublimity, without wholly abandoning the ridiculous, “that duels is hobsolete, and cannot by any manner of means be permitted in the Service. And in an establishment which I’ve the honour to preside over, it can’t even be heard or thought on. Why, the only thing the people up-stairs show sense in is in their quarrels. In the present state of Society, there’s such a sight of lying and backbiting they couldn’t afford time for duelling, even if the newspapers would let ’em. Even the officers in the other Services—I mean the Army and Navy—have left it off. And what do they do? They

apologise, or bring their actions, or refer it to a Court of Honour, which I'm willing to be on the present occasion. Mr. Tops, you'll apologise to the lady; Mr. —, I forget your surname, young man, but it don't matter, you'll oblige me by offering your hand to Mr. Tops."

"I've no objection to do anythink to oblige you, Mr. Binsby," said the good-humoured Tops; "but you'll own when it come to talkin' of punching of 'eads, that it's about time to strip the clothing off, and as for Maamselle Susan, I'd as leave starve my 'osses as hoffer her, if I knowed it."

"I am sure I'm quite agreeable," said his opponent; "if the right thing is done by the lady. Here's my hand, mate, and I'll stand glasses round with pleasure."

"We don't stand glasses in this establishment, sir," observed Mr. Binsby; "but you can do what you like in regard to that preposition, when you're next out on duty with the family equipage, or at any house you think proper to patronise on the first convenient occasion."

In this manner was the Temple of Janus closed by the janitor of Aubrey's household, whose next proceeding was to produce a bottle of cordial brandy, and administer a restorative to the fluttered housekeeper; after which, with many pleasant little speeches, and on the part of the females little amiable pretences that they never did take anything so potent, the "petty ver" offered, in the language of the euphonious Mr. Binsby, was passed round.

"Consider," said that dignitary, "what an ex-

ample we should set the up-stairs harristocrisy, if we were to demean ourselves by low-lived fights and quarrels. The weapon of the nineteenth century is tongues; and if a adversary gets the better of you at that, you've only got to say that you treat him with contempt, or that he is beneath your notice."

"But suppose he should say the same?" inquired Tops.

"Then," returned Mr. Binsby, "you may egg-spress your regret that you live in an age which prevents you from inflicting personal chastisement, or you publish the correspondence, when in all probability you're bound over. All you don't do is to fight; for if both the principels was mad enough, the seconds wouldn't let 'em for their own sakes. Who'd run the chance of being hanged for another man's quarrel, and with all them penny papers calling him a murderer in their leading articles?"

"I am sure," said Jane, "from all I've heard, there's that old Stingray would have a fine time of it, if duelling wasn't put down."

"And serve him right," cried Tops. "He's as vicious as the devil's favourite saddle-'oss, and as mischeevyous as a monkey. Now, from what I've heerd, not only master and missus say, but a sight of gents' grooms as knows him, he ain't fit to live within ten miles of any racing-stable in Hingland. He sets more folks by the ears than enough, and he ain't got a good word to say for nobody. And look at the tricks of all them cures of lawyers that get mixed hup with hevery one's bisness! D'ye mean to tell me it wouldn't be better for So-ci-ety, or whatever

yer call it, if a few of them was shot now and then? As for the law, if a cove prigs a hankercher off a hedge, or out of a pocket, he's precious soon pulled hup with a round turn; but there's no law for all them vagabones as goes about doing nothink but lying and doing mischief. I wish the good old times was back agen, and I don't care who knows it."

"Right you air, Mr. Tops," said Mr. Binsby, "provided they was back again, you see; but we must act all according, that's where it is. Act according, and you'll be righter than ever."

"And this here Stingray, and the lawyers, is to go on lying and blackguarding every one according," responded Tops. "Is that right? Becos if it is, I don't know nothink, and what's more I don't want to."

"As for Mr. Stingray," replied the magniloquent butler, "it would afford me for one the sincerest gratification, if he was never to set foot in this house again. I know he's a low bleyguard, as you were pleased to intimate, though Society tolerates him and calls him a great writer. I am quite aware of what he has been pleased to write against the Service." Here Mr. Binsby paused, as if the subject were too painful and disgusting. "But I can only say that I regard him, and all like him, with the contempt he merits, and I never pour him out a glass of sham, but I wish it was poison. I couldn't afford to do it myself, as it would be anything but according; but I did say to one of the hextra waiters at our last dinner, as had taken a drop reyther early, as those sort of persons are reyther apt to do, that if he spilt

the gravy over him, I should consider it in the light of an accidental occurrence. And he did spill it," added Mr. Binsby, slowly and reflectively, "and perhaps overdid it a little—I might say a great deal, and not be far out neither. But I was as good as my word; and that very individual waited yesterday at his Grace the Duke of Chalkstoneville's deyjeunay, and that individual is likewise engaged here for our dinner to-morrow. Mr. Stingray may look carving-knives at him if he likes; but he can't say but what it was an accident, after all."

"I honly wish I'd got the job to drive him home of a dark night in our holdest dog-cart—the one as goes errands and sich-like," quoth Tops. "I know where he'd find hissself, afore we'd got 'arf way to his lodging."

"I should like to damp the old wretch's bed for him," was the housemaid's contribution.

"Et moi aussi," quoth M. Isidore, "who had come in towards the close of the conversation with the whitest of white caps on his head, and a silver bed-candlestick in his hand, upon which sparkled a brilliant of the first water. "I would like ver' vell to make him von leetle vol-au-vent to heemself, and I would give to heem vot you call feece, poisson—ha! ha! he should say yesterday, 'I do not carry myself too vell—I 'ave de evil at de stomach'—de peeg, de blagueur dat he are. I should say, 'Ah! Monsieur Steengrai, you not carry yourself vell to-morrow. Eh bien! den you come no more to dine veet us, dere is all.' Ah! Meess Jenny, vat vicked eyes, you make me fear. Bon soir, mesdames! Bon repos, Monsieur

Beensby ; to-morrow we shall be ver occupés—diner de seize couverts—sixteen is it not ? This good Monsieur Aubrey he likes mosh to give de diners recherchés. He sall vot you call dam de expense—is it not ? Monsieur Steengrai, he vill come—oh, yes ! Adieu !” And the good-humoured Frenchman went chattering out of the room, singing a vaudeville air to himself up-stairs.

“ Good-night, mounseer !” was the ascending chorus ; for it was impossible for the most bigoted household to dislike Frenchy, for all the fun they made of him behind his back. Besides, there is a great masonry in hatred of the same object ; and it was quite evident that Mr. Stingray was by no means popular among the Dî Minores, in what Mr. Binsby was wont to call, with a degree of phonetic propriety which was not unappreciable, the second “ sally-mangy” in the “ petty maisong” of our young people up-stairs.

“ She ain’t one o’ my sort, nor yet no beauty, and though I don’t like a ’oss to be a white-stockin’ d one, I likes it in a gal, and this ’ere one isn’t over clean in the fetlocks one way or hanother,” remarked Mr. Tops to himself the first time he heard Mr. Binsby dignify the servants’ hall by the above-mentioned name ; “ but I don’t think a gal ought to be called no sich a name, even if she do happen to be a Sarah, and nothink better nor a kitchen-maid, as cleans the pots and kettles. Somebody must do it, that’s sartain ; and agen, if she’s second mangy Sally, who’s the first, that’s what I wants to know. If I thought hold Binsby meant—— But no ! I never

heard him say a word agen *her*, and he'd better not. It wouldn't be good for him, vile I'm in 'the Sarvice,' as the old himage calls it. Let's see, which on 'em is called Sairy hup-stairs? I've got it. It's Mother Pushfort's red-nosed filly, as married that old bald general; she's a Sally, and an uncommon mangy lot they are and no mistake. Master's got into a bad stable haltogether. It don't take much of a prophet to reckon them up. And them Pushforts is about the worst of the whole biling. Why that hold woman would do any dirty action to get squeegeed into one of the dook's parties, and see her name in the papers. And the darter, oh, scissors! how she do lay it on to Lady Madherewill. I'd turn 'em hup pretty quick, if I was master. Would I leave that hangelic creetur, as he's owner of, among sich a lot? Not if I knowed it. I'd as leave turn the winner of this year's Hoaks into a knacker's yard, or a hospittle for cab-'osses, if so be as sich a hinstitooshun existed hanywheres in this here charrytible metropolus." So saying, Mr. Tops executed half a score of winks directed at vacancy, apparently intended to convey the impression to inanimate nature that he was "all there;" whistled a few bars of a popular melody; felt in his pockets for a halfpenny, tossed it up, apparently speculating mentally on woman; caught it; cried "tails it is," and proceeded to look "arter the 'osses" with a serenity which many a Serene Highness might well have envied.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GONE TO THE AMERICAN BAR.

Whar do you hail from, stranger? Whar ar you bound to? What's your bis'niss? Let's liquor up.—*States' Inquisition, passim.*

AT that very time, but not exactly at the same hour, Mr. Manvers, after visiting various bars in New York of the most refined and elegant pretensions, as far as gas, liquor, language, and manners generally were concerned, and after partaking of a diversified series of "smiles," "cocktails," "mint-juleps," "eye-openers," "corpse-revivers," and other drinks remarkable for the ingenuity both of their concoction and nomenclature, considered himself in a fit and proper condition to be initiated into the mysteries of the "United Association or Neck-or-nothing Blood-waders," whose threefold objects were to chaw up the rotten English aristocracy, to annex the British Isles, and to make Queen Victoria squirm.

"Yes, sirree," said an enthusiastic young lady lecturer, who had just delivered an address at the Apollo Rooms in favour of the association, and who looked in her bloomer costume something like Robin

Hood as performed, say, at the Theatre Gravesend—"yes, sirree, and the b'hoys will do it, as sartain as Cain whipped Abel."

"I calculate," remarked a tall Yankee, spitting with admirable dexterity between Manvers and the lady, "our General Winfield Scott would have made your Duke of Wellington smell sulphur in jest about the time he could draw one boot on. *Considerin'* he was some pumpkins in Europyen scrimmages, it's perhaps fortunate that he served his time out and got safely buried, before we had finally concluded to annex your country."

The following is a portion of the speech delivered on the occasion by Hon. Cincinnatus Chopper Hogg, senator, from Applesarseville, Ohio:

"We see, gentlemen, a fellow-citizen hyar to-night, who has defied tyranny in its incestuous cradle, and taken a sight at monarchy in its spirit-squelching home. The bloodthirsty catamounts of despotism are howling on his footsteps over the tremenjus whale-pond of the stormy Atlantic, but I tell them in the name of this enlightened assemblage, in the name of Ada Camilla Angelina Lexington Pants, whose soul-dazzling sentiments have jest gone slick down into the deepest spring in your hearts and struck ile, I reckon"—(immense applause)—"I tell these stumped-out skunks of ante-diluvian despotism, that the sooner they slide and make tracks home, and tell Madame Victoria to shut up that old curiosity-store and rag-shop of hers, the British Constitooshun, the better it will be for their constitooshuns, unless they prefer •

“ being accommodated for glory in a coat of tar and
“ feathers. You see hyar, I say, in this stranger,
“ whom we welcome tew-night, a forest plant of
“ freedom which has busted out of that darned old
“ mouldy hothouse of the Britishers to spread his
“ eagle wings in a dazzling atmosphere of action. He
“ has come, as it were, like a critter out of an ex-
“ hausted receiver to breathe the free air, and to suck
“ the free drinks of an enlightened republic through
“ the straw of equality” (cheers) “tendered to him
“ by the Goddess of Liberty herself, attired in the
“ pantilettes of our beautiful female costume—a
“ straw, gentlemen, cut by the sickle of emancipated
“ labour from the illimitable expanse of those waving
“ corn-fields, where the setting sun gilds with gor-
“ geous splendour a wilderness of ungarnered grain,
“ and laughs to scorn with the happy opossum in
“ the gum-tree and full-fed fetterless ’coon—as they
“ grin over the ten-foot loam of the inexhaustible sile
“ of our glorious river valleys—the petty rotation-
“ system and agricultural insolvency of that top-
“ booted, busted-up, old fossil blow-hard, John Bull.”
(Tumultuous expression of rapture.) “I tell yew,
“ fellow-citizens and Blood-waders,” continued the
inspired orator, “that when the Pilgrim Fathers
“ quitted that darned little island thyar—that is, if
“ they ever did quit it; for I du myself believe that
“ if this glorious country war ever discovered at all, it
“ was done by a natyve American—the only fammily
“ of trew grit they left behind them was that of the
“ illustrious stranger whom we welcome in this hall
“ to-night. If, gentlemen, you doubted the fact, his

“ name alone would prove it to you. I pronounce
 “ that name aloud, and call on yew for a cheeyr to
 “ shake the dust out of the trestles of the rotten
 “ coffin-throne of monarchy to St. James’s, London,
 “ with a forty Niagara power of American acclama-
 “ tion—three cheeyrs and a tiger for Washington Otis
 “ Lafayette Shofel Winch. He can hit straight out
 “ from the shoulder, and weighs over two hundred
 “ and twenty pound.”

We need not add that the cheers were deafening and unanimous. It will be seen that Mr. Manvers had paid a handsome tribute to his adopted country in his change of name. We will not trouble ourselves to republish his speech in answer, which was hearty and so much to the purpose, that it formed two or three splendid headings for the next issue of the “New York Renegade,” in the following style :

IMMENSE SENSATION ! EDITOR COW-HIDED AGAIN !!

SPEECH OF A DEMOCRATIC BRITISHER.

THREATENED ANNEXATION OF THE BRITISH ISLES.

THE BLOOD-WADERS CONCLUDE FOR INSTANT
 INVASION.

BARNUM IN THE ASCENDANT. A ROYAL “HAPPY
 FAMILY” BESPOKEN FOR HIS MUSEUM, &c. &c.

An escaped criminal makes a first-rate indignation rebel and patriot in a foreign clime, and Manvers lost no opportunity of painting his country in the blackest colours. Unfortunately he was furnished too readily with texts, which only required to be handled with a

little dexterity to still further inflame the virulence of Transatlantic resentment against the Old Country. The Sutherland evictions, the wrongs of Ireland, and the starving poor of England, lost nothing in his hands; and when he proceeded to declare that the rotten-hearted oligarchs of Great Britain hated and feared the free institutions of the States, and that the ladies of the Court were instructed not even to dance with a Yankee Attaché at that old rabbit-hutch of a palace at St. James's, the speaker made a hit beyond his most sanguine expectations. He was the lion—we beg pardon, the “old hoss,” the live alligator, the real grit, the striped and spotted ring-tailed painter of the evening, and if the “drunk” had lasted long enough, and no fresh excitement had occurred to wipe him out, his admirers would have been ready to run him for President, had there been no legal impediment to such a proceeding.

Unfortunately for Mr. Manvers and his political prospects, his money was soon spent, and the sympathy of his admirers and adherents vanished with it. We must do them the justice to say that, had his pocket been much better stored than it was, they would nearly, if not quite as soon, have got tired of him, and pronounced the fatal verdict of his extinction, in the craving after some fresh excitement. The sentence of “Let him slide!” is nowhere so easily and certainly pronounced of a new favourite as in that wonderful country, where Society is represented by a series of dissolving views, and where whole strata of men and measures vanish, and give place to new, not less completely, but somewhat more rapidly than

the geological periods of the earth's formation. Washington Otis Lafayette was soon pronounced a fossil, and shelved accordingly. On the occasion of his last stump speech against England, his happiest efforts fell utterly dead on the ears of the assembly; and when he showed symptoms of disgust and indignation, he narrowly escaped gouging and even lynching, and was forced to make an ignominious exit. In vain did he make—it must be owned in an intellectual point of view—a most successful effort to adopt the style and sentiment of the great Cincinnatus Chopper Hogg, and tell his hearers that he could run a better and bigger island than Britain from a spoonful of melted metal into a wash-hand basin of dirty water. In vain did he facetiously remark that the country was so small, that a man could not safely get out of bed in the morning without danger of stepping over the side of the island. In vain did he denounce Queen, Commons, and institutions. The temper of the mob was different; and he was denounced for his pains in libelling our beloved and respected Sovereign as a mean-spirited skunk and scoundrel. True it is that he had attempted an “operation” in American notions, especially in revolvers and torpedoes, for the purposes of invasion; and another in Catawba wine and peach-brandy, with the avowed determination of forcing on the haughty islander the products of the Western hemisphere, so soon as a Republican Proclamation should be dated from St. James's. True it is, that he had contracted for ten thousand hickory handles to furnish bill-books for cutting down the hedges of Kent and Surrey, and dislodging the defenders of those

petty counties ; but the game was soon up, and his hotel bill had become unpleasantly proportionate to the colossal characteristics of the favoured abiding-place of the bird of freedom. So Manvers "sloped," and tried billiards down South ; but it didn't answer. He migrated to California ; but was unsuccessful at the diggings. He then returned northward, and actually for some time existed as touter in an establishment for the plunder of poor emigrants on their landing. At last, however, he joined a spirit-rapping confraternity in the capacity of bully, and picked up a tolerable livelihood.

Here let us leave him at present, having already somewhat anticipated the present date of our narrative. Throughout all his vicissitudes there was something which he clung to and cherished—something in the shape of a soiled deed or lease, which he would occasionally unfold from its resting-place near his gorilla-like bosom, and look at with mingled passion and exultation. Then, after a coarse onion-flavoured supper, he would breathe curses in the supposed direction of England, and shake his clenched fist with malignant spite and triumph. For whatever it was, he seemed under the impression that it could only be made use of to his own benefit, were he to return to the Old Country, which did not exactly lie within the sphere of his calculations. As it was, it sufficed to feed revenge, and soothe his tortured spirit with the feeling that some one whom he hated suffered through his possession of that mysterious document.

Clever as Manvers was in a certain line, he found Yankee smartness on its own ground more than a

match for him ; and he longed to get back to England to make use of his new observation and acquirements. Had the epoch of his expatriation been a few years later, he might have shone as a Fenian leader with brilliant success. But in that respect he lived before his time, like other heroes who have not made their mark in their generation.

If, however, Fortune was so far cruel to John Swindles Manvers, *alias* Washington Otis Lafayette Shofel Winch, *alias* Dr. Mordred Orfila Grinder, she has not been niggardly in her after-supply of a sufficient crop of rascaldom to meet the exigencies of the demand and the occasion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DIGRESSION AND A DEFENCE.

The earliest story-telling we are acquainted with is undoubtedly of Eastern origin. Of this, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments may be taken as the best known popular and meritorious example. These may be considered in one respect as essentially digressive; since story is included within story, like the ivory balls in a Chinese puzzle. This example has been followed by some of the best modern writers; not only so far as story-telling is concerned, but in actual digressions of the author. Whether this be regarded as an insidious attempt on a writer's part to introduce his own sentiments and opinions, tacked on to his legitimate narrative like a parcel of superabundant trimmings or embroidery, or as the mere exhibition of a rambling and loquacious propensity, it is not our intention even to attempt to determine. But if a romance may aspire sometimes to accomplish a higher mission, than merely to impair the memory and weaken the understanding by peopling the brain with characters without reflection—mere clothed lay figures and painted puppets set in motion through an ingenious tourbillon of events—to end most commonly in the commonest catastrophe of marriage, then the author may justly be allowed occasionally to ride his own hobbies as best he may. And this even at the peril of bringing down upon his head the stern censure of the Genius of criticism, who either condemns his style, or has been hit in the eye by some chance date-stone flung at random from the speculative attic-window among the crowd of passers-by.—ARBELLINUS. *Philosophic Inquiries*, vol. ii. chap. viii. pp. 93-4.

OUR fantoccini are put to bed for a time, and consequently we, in the capacity of showman, having our hands temporarily disengaged, feel inclined to embrace the opportunity, and make a speech on

behalf of our story and ourselves. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, be kind enough not to walk down and refresh yourself just at present, although the drop-scene has just fallen on Act I., and the entr'acte has in reality commenced. We shall not plead profit and expediency as our excuse for anything that we may have uttered, or made our characters utter, to offend the delicate susceptibilities of the "world." This we leave to the fast authors and authoresses of the period, who write up or down to the depravity and false taste which they recognise as their market, and increase the craving by pandering to its demands. We could, had we been so minded, have far more easily have shunted ourselves into the recognised grooves of fiction. Nay, as the critics cannot put us either into the confessional or the witness-box, we are not disposed to confess what we may have already done in this line. A "great thing" was open in dashing ritualistic romance, seasoned with bigamy, and husband-poisoning *quan. suff.* A slashing financial bubble story of the day has, we admit, suggested itself to our humble capacities, illustrated by some well-known characters. But we felt that we should have been treading on too dangerous ground. We could not easily have steered clear of personality; for in depicting this style of roguery, who could have escaped—we mean, of course, in the great commercial world? Of the resentment of the mere minority of detected rogues, we, of course, should have not felt so much apprehension, at least for periods varying from five to fifteen years to come.

But of the vast and powerful body of the unconvicted rich and unscrupulous, united in the common instincts and interests of self-protection, we must own we stand in wholesome apprehension and fear. What deadly enmity might we not have incurred at the hands of the righteous who are not yet forsaken! No, we are not distinguished for prudence; but we cannot afford to excite the anger of the larger half of this prosperous commercial community. Look at all the clever schemers and swindlers who have sold out in time, or settled money on their wives, or whom the law can't catch, or refuses to tackle. The other day we inquired after the health of a financier of some celebrity, whose utter smash and exposure we looked for every morning in our daily paper.

"Just done the neatest thing I've heard for many a day," was the answer from a friend of an appreciative turn and faculty. "Don't you remember hearing of his return for Sneaksborough?"

We answered that we did perfectly well, but that he would never take his seat; as there was a valid and powerful petition for corruption and bribery cut and dried."

"Ho! ho!" laughed our informant, "is there? That's all you know about it. The petition is quashed, that you may rest assured of; and what is more Jobkins has pocketed a thousand pounds clear gain by his election, after paying all his expenses."

We looked our astonishment.

"What do you mean?" we said.

"Most people pay something to get into Parliament, don't they?" asked our friend; "more or less

one way or the other, especially for such a cursed rotten place as Sneaksborough, where every vote is counted and valued. Let me see, it was done last time for just treble the money he made; but it turned out a good investment for the scamp who got in then. Well, you see, our friend Jobkins cast a wolf's eye upon Sneaksborough, where there was a great depreciation in the staple trade of the town just then—and is now, for that matter—and he accordingly went in for a large foreign contract in coloured shirtings—twenty-eight thousand pounds was the figure. He managed to get rid of this for thirty-three thousand pounds, thereby clearing five thousand pounds. It cost him two thousand pounds to get in, and another neat two thousand pounds to bribe the petitioners to squash their virtuous endeavour. So that you see, as I said, he got his seat clear, and a thousand pounds in the bargain. Decidedly the cleverest thing of the day, and I've known a few smart ones, and no mistake, old fellow."

Now, the fact is, there is another great difficulty in holding up the mirror to the financial world. When almost every one is, and must necessarily be, a rogue, in order to succeed in acquiring position and fortune, how is the novelist to distinguish and select his materials? It is a perfect *embarras de richesses*, or, more properly, *des riches*. One wants lights as well as shadows in painting every view of life. There are honest men still with money, made or inherited by their fathers, and there are many more honest without it. There are honourable professional men, even of eminence, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*. There

are poor rogues with feelings and a conscience. There are noblemen like Lord Egbert, and noble women like Blanche. There are good-natured, well-meaning personages like Madeiraville, and worthy and zealous crotchet-mongers like Mr. De Lolme. There are mixed characters like Arthur Aubrey, whose follies and vices do not originate from the heart. Then there is a large and safe choice of model villains in every profession and walk of life, whence one may pick out examples without personality, or peril of incurring the pleasant penalties of libel, true or false. One does not impeach all the profession, in branding the professional villanies of Grinderby and Cousens; nor render oneself liable for a breach of privilege in sketching the portraiture of the Right Honourable Felix Sowerface, M.P. In painting a brace of lawyer's clerks, we have not injured a large and deserving body of our fellow-citizens; and in our picture of the Escurial and its frequenters, although we are thereby conscious of running a tilt against a huge demoralising institution of the age, we are certain that no one can pretend to recognise the exact specimen or locality which has furnished our materials. As for the general and particular reflections on men and manners, on fashions and frivolities, the freaks of our puppets, and the showman's running commentary on them and their surroundings; as to our political and social diatribes, and the evils that we see, or seem to see, spreading and festering like a gangrene around, we beg to apologise most particularly to every one who feels hurt by anything that we have said. It shows, at

least, that there is some conscience and self-appreciation extant.

And depend upon it that those who affect to be offended on behalf of others are tarred by the same brush which we have flourished so sacrilegiously—at least, in their imagination. If that be sound, which our sense and feeling, rightly or wrongly, teach us to denounce as rotten; if we are deluded in our conclusion that her commercial prosperity, and the former proud success of her arms, have led to the waste of England's elements of strength, the selfish neglect of her industrious poor, the insecurity of her shores, the diminution of her power and prestige, and the insincerity of her statesmen and public men, then we are also willing to apologise for a delusion, as impotent and harmless, as it is complete. If we have endeavoured to sift the country's social relations, and found that they are all based on hollowness and wrong; that there is no sympathy between class and class; and that never in the history of the world was there an age of base metal, such as exists in Great Britain in the present era; and if our facts and theories, our deductions and conclusions, are alike false and uncalled for, then we must plead our want of penetration and our ignorance of right living.

If human flesh and blood are not held cheaper here than the hunter's game in a boundless wilderness teeming with life; more worthless than the carcasses of wolf or rat, while the luxury of the few boils down the essence of millions of their fellow-creatures' bones, with a cynicism more atrocious than that of the Roman gluttons who cast their slaves into their eel-

stews to fatten and flavour the slimy luxury to the correct patrician taste, then our fancy is mistaken; unless, indeed, it should be conceded that such things do exist, and that it is essential they should be as they are.

Possibly Moloch and the Minotaur of Crete do not demand their yearly tribute of maidens sacrificed in street and in mill to lust of man and greed of gold! And the ladies of England, they combine their forces, do they not, in virgin cohort and matronly phalanx, to rescue and defend their doomed or erring sisters?—"sisters," did we say? we ask pardon for the mistake. These ladies of wealth, and beauty, and rank, they do not rather excuse Moloch for his fantasy, and pat Minotaur on the back. "Naughty demon," and "funny monster," they do not say. Of course, the poor foreigner, or the denationalised Englishman who suggests such a libel, is worthy of the pillory, and of the stones which furnished St. Stephen's cairn. Out, blasphemous rascal! Hit him on the mouth, young hero of the Escorial and the Lady's Ride, "darling fellow" of your sister, and "dear boy" of the night-house keeper, and your other "friends." Hitherto, *ingenuus puer* of the double face, and habitation, and language—no, not quite language; since the drawing-room rather patronises the argot of the casino and the slum—hither! and pronounce our condemnation in your "awfulest" style. We are *not* "awfully jolly;" do not, therefore, commend us to your present Hetaira, or your destined bride. Here is a gentleman of fortune, who

shall assist you in denouncing us. *Non olet.* His money does not smell. True, he is a felon ; but an unconvicted one—what is that to you or us ? He gives first-rate spreads, and has a vote in Parliament, interest without principle, dear boy ! He might get you appointed to a commissionership to examine into the crowded state of the charnel-houses of the poor. Think of that, and honour his success ! He has built his domestic edifice of respectability on the ruin of a thousand shareholders, and got clear of the meshes of the financial snare in time. We are only supposed to be writing on a second floor for bread and fame. You had better take a lesson from his book than ours. Here is a clergyman. What was his text on Sunday ? “Go, and sin no more.” He preached from it an excellent sermon, written by a needy contributor to a sporting paper, who is secretary to a casino, and has a large family to bring up in sin, prosperously if he can. He paid for it, and preached it too. What more do you expect from him ? He left his sermon in the vestry-room ; its precepts and practice at the church door. He will condemn us to his lady admirers in terms of the strongest reprobation. What is that book of poems, reverend sir, that you hold in your hand ? “Hermaphroditus, a Classical Drama,” and “Lays of Sapphic Love.” These are only semi-imaginative pruriencies, the lacquered filth of Greece and Rome, the “nude and the antique,” and the sensually “sublime.” That which the age should reject and condemn is Truth, in modern garb of broadcloth, in crinoline or in rags. This is what it likes

not; dares not listen to. Conceal your moral ulcers, Respectability! Beggar! hide your sores in the street.

And now, ere the curtain rises on other and different scenes, we once more bid you, dear reader, pause, ere you question the reality and vraisemblance of our personages, or the conduct of our tale. Our moral you will not—cannot—condemn. You, sir, are a father and a husband; you, madam, a sister, a mother, or a wife. Be you what you may, you are human in your sympathies. You love virtue—at least, in the abstract—do you not? You would roll back the tide of reproach that threatens to overwhelm England; if you could do it by a wish, by a thought, apart from your own passions and prejudices, and the circumstances which benefit you, or hem you in? And you, young lady or gentleman, if you are not too pure and innocent to enter a theatre, or read a newspaper, or walk by daylight in our public streets, neither parent nor guardian, neither lover nor brother, need fear that you will suffer any diminution of your innocence and purity by the perusal of these pages. Would that the pages of real life, the panorama of breathing forms and beings around you, were better and purer for your sakes!

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